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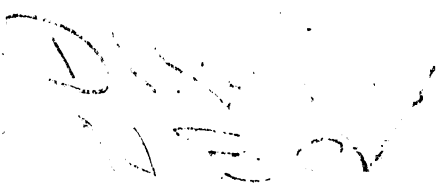

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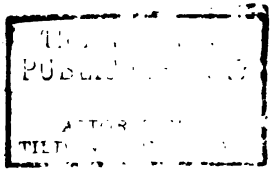

SHE PAUSED AT THE SOUND OF A FOOTSTEP.

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THE WAY OF A MAN

A STORY OF THE NEW WOMAN

BY

THOMAS DIXON

AUTHOR OF

THE CLANSMAN (The Birth of a Nation),
THE SOUTHERNER, Etc.

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THE WAY OF A MAN

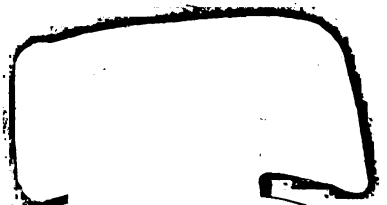
CHAPTER I

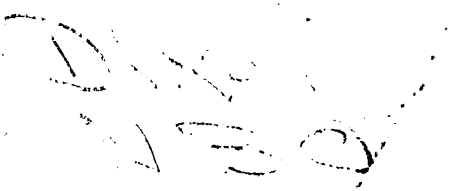
THE FESTIVAL OF EVE

THE caterer who furnished the refreshments for Ellen West's reception had provided a fat flunkey who stood on the sidewalk, opened the doors of cabs and automobiles and ushered each guest under the striped awning to the doorway. It was well for the flunkey that his functions ceased at the door. His wind would have failed before he reached the fifth story of the old building on Fifth Avenue overlooking Madison Square.

Ellen prided herself on her ability to climb. Those long flights of stairs were a daily challenge to her splendid body. It was one of her favorite amusements to watch the perspiration slowly suffuse the face of a male escort as he mounted them.

A late admirer who was short, stout and bald, had frankly given out at the top of the third flight, sat down and mopped his brow and shining pate.





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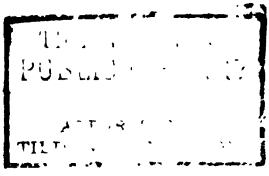


eloquent changing face with keen interest and admiration.

Jane Walton, who had made herself famous in municipal reform work, was still discussing with her the latest phase of the white slave traffic when Lucy presented the short stout figure of a fine-looking grey-haired woman of sixty.

"The Rev. Anna Royce—Miss West."

"I feel so poor and humble, Dr. Royce," she cried, "when I look on your beautiful white hair, grown grey in the service of the great cause."

The fine eyes of the woman crusader grew dim for a moment as she pressed the warm hand of the younger leader.

"I am content, dear child," she slowly replied. "I have fought a good fight. I have kept the faith. Younger and stronger hands will carry it on to final victory. I glory in you. I am here to-night to say God bless you and keep you always strong to do His will in the new uplift of Humanity."

Ellen tried in vain to hold her. But she laughed and nodded and passed on into the throng. Others crowded behind her.

They were all here to-night—the feminine leaders of the new thought that sweeps the century: Dr. Elizabeth Price, President of the Women's Medical College;

Emily Willard, the artist; Margaret Moore, the latest sensation in the dramatic world, with three plays running on Broadway; the Hon. Martha Mason, the new Mayor of Koskosia; Beatrice Moreland, the young heiress of millions, whose eloquence in behalf of woman's suffrage had stirred the Old and New World; and darting from group to group with tireless energy was Mrs. Eleanor Bishop, a leader of New York's four hundred.

The hour marked the supreme triumph in Ellen West's eventful life. Barely twenty-seven years old, she had in five years fought her way from the poverty and obscurity of Washington Square into fame and fortune.

Her radiant personality to-night quivered with the consciousness of her triumph—its strength and solid achievement. Her position as editor of *The New Era* was secure—her salary six thousand a year. The owners of the magazine were a group of modern women leaders, rich in their own name. Each of them swore by the daring and sensational young writer, whose brilliant essays, in their opinion, were shaking the foundations of the old order of society.

Alice Clark, the President of the New Era Publishing Company, had just paused and whispered:

"You're glorious to-night, my child! Every woman in America is proud of you."

Ellen lifted her graceful head in protest while she flushed with pride.

"Take care you don't hold a meeting of the Board of Directors soon and warn me to be more conservative."

"Not even if we grow as prosperous as the *Ladies' Home Journal!*"

"God save us from such a fate," Ellen laughed.

From every quarter of the big brown room admiring eyes were focused on the heroine of the evening, and from her smiling response it was easy to guess that she knew the measure of her triumph and prized it accordingly.

She was conscious not only of the achievement of success from the old point of view, but the thing that stirred the depths of her being was the certainty that her mind and personality were creating a new force in the ferment of American life. The first article of her creed was that America, freed from the strangling conventions of the old civilization of Europe, must lead Humanity into new paths of glory—and woman, the last-born child of world democracy, must become the leader of this mighty movement.

The dreamy inspiration of the religious fanatic crept into the brown eyes as she swept the crowd with deliberate calm.

In her inner heart she knew that the calm was partly

assumed. She was, in fact, looking for Randolph Field and mildly wondering why he had hidden himself in the crowd. There was a feud between them, which she would have indignantly denied had he accused her of it. Yet in her soul she knew it was there. She knew that her voluptuous body had dazzled the materialist who lived next door. It amused her to watch his vain attempts to conceal this infatuation. The certainty of her domination of this leader of modern realism was the thing which gave keenest zest to the evening.

Whatever may have been the secrets of her appeal to the public imagination, there could be no sort of doubt about the secret of her appeal to Field. It was the victory of woman over man—not man in the abstract, but man the individual—strong, insolent in his strength, conscious of powers that were cruel and merciless in the struggle of sex.

She had deliberately dressed to-night to accent every point of her remarkable physical beauty. The low-cut evening dress with its tiny silver straps across the full shoulders revealed in all their glory the finely moulded neck and arms. And no daring society leader at the opera had ever donned a gown which revealed more fully the lines of a perfect bust.

Ellen West with all her radical views of woman's work had really no desire to prove herself a man. She

gloried in her womanhood. In her inmost woman's soul she had developed the passionate desire to dominate man by sheer feminine charm.

Her affair with Field had been purely a struggle of personality—of mind and body in woman against mind and body in man. She was experimenting with the male animal which Field's strong character presented with such persistent challenge.

For the past six months he had been calling her daily from the little balcony of the fire-escape in the rear. With the agility of a cat he would spring through his window, perch on the iron rail and call to her.

Against her protest that he reminded her of an undersized tomcat prowling on a back yard fence, he replied good-naturedly, accepting the taunt as a compliment, and proceeded to imitate a tomcat with such accuracy that she laughed to the verge of hysterics.

There was no such thing as insulting him. It simply couldn't be done. To every jibe and sneer he replied with a grin and turned the attack to his own ends. She had ceased to attack him and had begun to enjoy the tribute to her charm which his persistent admiration implied.

She harbored no delusions about his real character. She knew that he regarded all women as legitimate

game for the male hunter. Nor did he attempt to conceal or palliate his creed of life.

The day following one of his gay parties he appeared on the iron balcony earlier than usual to apologize for the noise. He never apologized for the party. Nor did she reproach him. Her creed of individual freedom forbade it. She had no right to lecture him on his personal life—unless he pressed his personal appeal to a point which gave her this right.

She really expected him to do so to-night. He had told her that he had something of grave importance to say. Her curiosity was piqued. She couldn't help wondering how deeply and seriously he could talk about the individual sex problem if driven to self-revelation.

She searched the crowded room in vain for Field's compact figure. He suddenly appeared at her side, a deep scowl on his usually imperturbable face.

"Where have you been hiding?" she asked quietly.

"You missed me then?"

"Yes."

"Why?" he questioned sharply.

"You had something very important to tell me."

"You hadn't forgotton that, either," he mused with a smile.

"What's on your mind, Randy?"

"Same old trouble—you!"

"But your scowl—isn't that unusual?"

"I'm not scowling!" he snapped.

"But you were."

"Say," he whispered, gently touching her bare arm, "can't you shake this mob for a minute?"

"Certainly," was the quick reply. "You've been awfully nice to-night, Randy. I appreciate your generous services as my doorman. We'll slip up to the roof."

She threaded her way through the throng, smiling and chatting, Field carelessly following.

At the narrow passage to the roof which led from the outer hall she paused until he reached her side. Two minutes later they were seated on the iron settee beside a tiny fountain, with the star-lit skies of a perfect June night above.

A moment's silence followed.

Field was gazing at her with a serious intensity unusual to his light bantering habits with women.

"You know that I'm in love with you, Ellen," he said at last.

"Don't make me laugh, Randy," she protested.

"I mean it!" he whispered.

Ellen laughed outright.

"You don't know the first meaning of the word love."

She held his gaze firmly and he slowly lowered his with a quizzical expression about his full lips.

"I ought to—I've had some experience."

Again she laughed at the audacity of the nimble mind that had leaped straight to the point she held against him—and met it with a confession.

"That's just why I laugh."

"But you shouldn't, Ellen," he pleaded; "that's why you shouldn't. I pay the highest possible tribute. I have known many women in my busy life——"

"Busy's the word," she interrupted.

He smiled in spite of himself and continued:

"Of all the women I have ever known then—you are the queen. I'm tired of the vapid, the inane, the ignorant, the vain. I glory in the brilliancy and beauty of your mind——"

"Sure it's my mind, Randy?"

He hesitated and swept her superb body with an admiring look.

"I'll be honest, Ellen—mind and body. The body is the soul after all—at least its supreme expression. And I want *you*—body and soul—want you with a longing that is pain——"

Ellen laid her hand on his with a gesture of command. His deep earnestness had evidently surprised and stirred her.

"Stop," she ordered sharply. "Don't try to string

me, Randy. At least be honest with me. You know that you had a dinner party with two girls and a chum in your place night before last. It ended in the wee hours before dawn."

She looked him squarely in the eye and again he lowered his head.

"That's why I'm talking to you seriously to-night, Ellen," he said with quiet intensity. "I'm tired of it all—it's senseless waste of time and life; its futility. I'm disgusted with muself for the first time. You've done this. I'm madly in love with you and I've tried to forget it lately in foolish dissipation. But it's no use. You've got me. I'll give up every girl I've ever known on earth if you'll be mine. I'll work as I've never worked, write as I've never written the big books of which I've dreamed in the best moments I've known —will you?"

A smile played about her full sensitive lips as she looked at him curiously.

"You would really give up the whole string of your pretty girls for me?"

"On my soul, I swear it!" he cried earnestly.

"Thanks for the compliment," she answered slowly. "If I didn't know that you were a hopeless liar and that it is impossible to teach an old dog new tricks I could almost love you after that speech."

"But it's no use?"

"Not a bit."

"All right, we'll let it rest at that point for to-night. I'll ask you again to-morrow. In the meantime, I've just one favor—a real personal favor to beg of you to-night."

"Not again that I kiss you, Randy!"

"No—I'm going to do that by force sooner or later—no; this is more serious."

"What on earth?"

He fumbled the lapel of his coat and finally plunged to the point.

"The loafer, Edwin Brown, is here to-night."

"Brown himself?"

"Yes. I just ask you one favor, Ellen; don't meet the blackguard."

"Hoity, toity, man, why should the pot call the kettle black?"

Field drew himself up stiffly.

"You don't class me with Brown?"

"Not exactly, no;" she answered slowly. "He buys with money. You buy with wit, superior intelligence, muscle and the charm of personality."

Field bit his lip and moved uneasily.

"You will see him?" he asked forlornly.

"Certainly," she laughed. "I'm just a little curious

to know if the secret of his success with women *is* all due to money."

"Of course, it's money."

"There must be a little more."

"Why?"

"Otherwise he wouldn't have the audacity to come to my apartment to-night in person. And if he has honored me with a personal call, don't you think he deserves a hearing?"

"I do not!"

"I do—come—we'll go down at once."

In spite of his protests she led the way down the narrow stairs into the brilliantly lighted room. Brown's presence had become known in spite of Bridges' final decision not to announce him. He stood with Sylvester the center of a group of curious women to whom he had been introduced.

CHAPTER II

THE MAN OF MONEY

JUST inside the doorway Field made his final plea. In his impetuous earnestness he seized Ellen's arm with violence.

"Please, Ellen, for the love of heaven," he begged, "don't lower yourself by speaking to that insufferable blackguard."

She withdrew her arm with a touch of resentment.

"Nonsense, Randy, he is my guest."

"He came without an invitation!"

"Oh, no, dear boy, he reads the papers—at least he owns one. My announcement contained a welcome to every thoughtful man and woman in New York. Besides, I'm consumed just now with curiosity to see what he is really like at close range."

"But, Ellen, I'm madly in love with you," Field interrupted; "I won't stand for it!"

The tall figure grew a bit taller as her eyes met his.

"I'm afraid you'll have to stand it," she said quietly. "I'm not in love with you, and if I were I wouldn't take orders from you. Remember, dear boy, that I

live in the big world—a man's world. I'm going to meet and speak to any human being who interests me. Run along now and don't annoy me."

Field flung himself suddenly into the crowd and disappeared before she had finished speaking.

Lucy Sheldon rushed to meet her.

"Where on earth have you been?" she cried.

"On the roof listening to Randy's fool love-making," was the frank reply.

"Well, you're fined for disorderly conduct. The caterer is waiting your orders to announce the buffet dinner."

Ellen drew up both hands in disgust.

"Tell him to go ahead—what did I hire him for?"

Lucy waved the signal to the caterer, who proceeded to serve the dinner picnic fashion from the sideboard while his minions filled the glasses from the huge punch bowl on the center table.

"And what's more important," Lucy continued in a stage whisper, "you have a very distinguished guest here to-night who is vainly seeking an introduction to his hostess."

"You mean Edwin Brown?"

"Of course, silly—next to you he's the sensation of the evening. May I introduce him now?"

Ellen suddenly faced her friend.

"Lucy Sheldon, do you mean to tell me that you know that man?"

"And why not?"

"You — the demure little ingenue defender of the home and champion of all the old-fashioned virtues in women?"

"Certainly—he's one of my best friends—gave me my first job on a newspaper in New York and gave me the letter to Holt, his big rival, that got my permanent job—what of it?"

The ugly thought that crept into Ellen's mind for a moment was dismissed with a laugh.

"Oh, nothing, dear; you're too innocent for this world. I've told you that before, I think."

"You'll meet him now?"

"Certainly, I'm curious to know him."

A minute later she returned with Brown. The meeting was a distinct shock to Ellen West. A man of more striking and charming appearance she had never met. The shock upset her preconceived ideas of the typical flesh-hunter of whom she had heard much and read more. He walked with an easy swing that provoked comradeship. His tall, finely moulded figure suggested strength and poise of character. The distinctly handsome face wore a winning smile that refused to come off in the presence of a beautiful woman. His clothes

fitted to perfection, yet left no suggestion of fine dress. Good-natured, jovial, conscious of power, but without the slightest trace of insolence, he extended his hand with a simple speech that disarmed her.

"I really must beg your pardon, Miss West, for this intrusion to-night, but I was so anxious to meet you I couldn't resist the temptation to accept your democratic announcement — if for no other reason than to teach you how dangerous such an innovation might be—am I forgiven?"

"There is nothing to forgive, I assure you. I meant every word of my democratic creed in that invitation."

"Then I shall be very happy to-night," he replied, bending low.

"But why this overwhelming desire to meet me personally?" Ellen asked with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes. "I've heard that your tastes ran to the ingenue type!"

He laughed heartily but made no protest.

"It may be true. I never dispute the gossips. I'm more honored by their attentions than I deserve. Whatever trend a man's taste may have taken in the past you will admit that a new woman has arrived."

"And you have come to appraise her?"

"Exactly. And I don't mind telling you that my impressions are overwhelmingly favorable."

Ellen smiled at his boyish emphasis and evident sincerity.

"Thank you!" she said with a touch of irony.

"I mean it—and mind you, these impressions had to come along some pretty rough road before they settled. You know a man has been taught from childhood to trail the 'nice' girls. You're a very disturbing young woman. You do a lot of things that make a fellow sit up and take notice."

"For instance?"

He looked at her with frank admiration, a smile twinkling about the corners of his steel grey eyes, and deliberately swept the room searching for a way out.

"Could we get away from the crowd?" he asked appealingly.

She threw him a quick look of surprise as he went on eagerly:

"Would you honor me with a few minutes' quiet talk if it's not asking too much? The animals are all feeding now. They won't miss you."

She hesitated and said:

"Certainly, come up on my roof. I've a little nook of a garden up there."

"Splendid!" he whispered.

She led him through the main doorway into the

dimly lighted hall and up the narrow stairs to the identical seat beside the fountain on which she had chatted with Field twenty minutes before.

She repressed a laugh at the expense of mere man. She was studying the animal at close range. It had just dawned on her—the full significance of Field's desperate love-making, of Bridges' endless sighs, of Brown's audacity—they had each read into her final article on the "Free Alliance as a Substitute for Marriage" an invitation to make the personal experiment. The driveling idiots—as if she must thus advertise for a man!

She sat down on the iron seat, her nerves quivering with suppressed rage. Brown walked to the edge of the little garden, looked across the moonlit square toward the Metropolitan tower and up at the starlit sky. The movement enabled him to glance into every nook and corner of the place and make sure that they were alone.

Ellen's keen eye had caught the side glances.

"How quiet and beautiful it is up here!" he exclaimed. "Your own idea to fix this old roof into a garden, I'll bet?"

"Yes, I write here when the weather's fine," she answered.

He drew a chair in front of her and threw his tall

figure into it with an easy swinging grace and looked for a moment at her with deliberate admiration.

"Would it surprise you, Miss West," he began slowly, "if I told you that my call was made to-night with the most serious intentions?"

"Very much," she answered emphatically.

"It's true," he went on musingly. "You have not only interested me enormously as a passing sensation ——"

"Passing is good!" she interrupted.

"I mean, of course, from the newspaper point of view," he apologized, "but your personality, which seems to contradict your theories, has interested me far more."

"Really?"

"Honestly."

"And we have known each other just fifteen minutes."

He shook his head in protest.

"Pardon me. I have known you for more than a year."

Ellen frowned.

"I don't get the point of your joke," she answered drily.

"No joke, I assure you," he went on briskly. "From the day I heard you address a crowd in Union Square —a little more than a year ago—I have read every

line that you have written and attended every meeting at which you have spoken."

"Incognito?"

"Certainly not. This is a big village, Miss West. When I dismiss my car I go where I please and do as I please. The crowd doesn't know or care who I am. You have been the most puzzling study of the past year. When I see you sway a throng of eager listeners, discussing the history of suffrage and the abstract principles of democracy, there's something cold and steel-like in you that repels and yet provokes the deepest interest. I've heard you discuss the management of maternity hospitals, the sexual meaning of the dance, the segregation of the unfit, the improvement of the breed of men by proper mating and the white slave traffic with the cold precision of a demonstrator of anatomy pointing out the different nerves and muscles of the human body in a dissecting room.

"And still your interest held?" she asked.

"The funny part is that it grew in intensity. One minute I've thought you splendid. The next that you were absurd. I'll swear you were both, and yet always alive—alive to your finger tips with a power to communicate the sense of boundless vitality to others. You've drawn and held me as a magnet. I couldn't keep away from you ——"

He leaned forward and gazed at her intently.

"And so I'm here to-night."

"I am honored, I assure you," she said with a touch of sarcasm.

"To make myself perfectly plain, Miss West," he went on evenly, "I love you."

Ellen laughed until he began to flush with wounded pride. She lifted her rounded arms above her head and laughed again.

He waited for her to speak.

"And I am to believe, of course, that I am the first to whom you have ever spoken those three magic words?"

"On the other hand," he protested seriously, "I scorn so cheap a lie. To be honest with you, women have been my chief interest in life. I've never wasted a minute with them. I've always gotten the full value of both my time and my money. I've lost thousands in bad investments; I've lost hundreds of thousands in Wall Street crazy speculations; I've lost thousands and months of life fooling with vanities; I've nothing to show for it—but the women I have known and loved ——"

He paused, smiled and shook his handsome head.

"They have made life worth living. And because of

this I can truthfully say that I think our planet a nice place on which to tarry."

"At least you have the courage of your convictions," Ellen observed drily.

"You have been a revelation to me in the possibilities of a higher and more beautiful womanhood."

She leaned forward, fixed him with her eyes and spoke with intensity.

"And how much will you give for me?"

He hesitated and fumbled the black-braided watch guard which circled his neck, glanced at her uneasily, flushed and was silent.

"How much?" she insisted sternly.

He studied her and answered deliberately.

"A house on Fifth Avenue, a country place, and a settlement of twenty-five thousand a year."

The audacity and magnificence of his offer stunned her.

There could be no doubt about his meaning. There could be no doubt about his sincerity. His finely shaped hands were trembling and his voice quivered with excitement.

Ellen drew a deep breath, folded her arms and studied his face. He had not attempted to touch her hand or suggest the slightest liberty. His frankness and the poise with which he had announced his Epicur-

ean code of morals had appealed to her imagination.

He straightened his tall figure and waited for her to speak. A long silence followed which he broke at last in low tones.

"All right; we'll make it fifty thousand a year, if you say the word?"

Another silence.

When Ellen spoke at last there were tears in her voice as well as in her eyes.

"It would be silly for me to flare up and say that you have insulted me. As a matter of fact you have not. You have paid me the highest compliment you know how to pay a woman. But can't you see that it is just this condition of chattel slavery out of which I am struggling to lift women? For centuries she has been bought and paid for by man, her master. I have achieved my independence, thank God. Otherwise, I'm honest enough to tell you that your offer might have dazzled me. I don't see how the average woman who loves luxury could resist such a bid——"

She paused and laughed softly.

"From such a bidder."

Brown moved in protest.

"Now wait a minute—you mustn't joke. We've gotten beyond that. We're both in earnest. If I've

made a mistake, I'll get right. I've taken you at your word. You hate conventional marriage?"

"Yes."

"That's why I've offered you a free alliance which you could end at a moment's notice and yet maintain your position of wealth and all that power means. You refuse?"

"I scorn it."

"All right. Will you marry me?"

"Marry—you?"

"And why not?"

"What would you do with your other establishments?"

"You know that I have them?"

"I'm sure of it."

He pursed his lips, twisted his fingers with nervous cruelty and breathed deeply.

"You're not just torturing me, are you?" he asked.

"I want to see how deeply you are in earnest," she fenced.

"You know that I'm in earnest," he protested.

Another silence followed.

"I think you are," she said finally. "Otherwise you wouldn't hesitate about giving up your other girls."

"You see I had not faced this sort of possibility

when I came here to-night. I didn't think you were the marrying kind."

"And yet if you have read my work you must know that the marriage I seek is the highest ideal relation of two free men and women. As much higher than conventional marriage as heaven is above hell."

"But you would have it free, wouldn't you?"

"Absolutely."

"Then wouldn't you let me see one girl I know occasionally for a short time, if I really wished it? I'm fond of her; she didn't believe that I'd ever marry. And it wouldn't be quite the square thing to throw her overboard without a word—I'll end it in a month."

"You can see as many as you like."

"Yes, but I want you. I must have you. I never wanted anything quite so desperately and earnestly in my life and I'll pay the price if I must—anything you demand—will you marry me?"

"I'm not for sale at any price. When I find the man I love, I shall give myself, not sell."

"You won't marry me?" he asked in astonishment.

"No."

He rose quickly.

"It's incredible!" he cried impatiently. "Of course I'm spoiled. But this is the first big jolt of my life.

"You'll recover."

"Of course, I've got to—but look here ——"

He seated himself and touched her arm with the gentlest sort of appeal.

"You'll give me a chance with the other fellows to win your love?"

"And why not?" she answered archly. "You're really a most agreeable young man now that I've seen you at close range. I've been wondering why a man of your fine body and mind should waste his talents in senseless dissipation?"

"That's a fact, isn't it? Why don't you reform me?"

Ellen laughed.

"It doesn't appeal to me. I've more important work to do."

"I'd try to make the job agreeable," he urged. "Honestly I would."

Ellen rose without reply. He knew that further words would be wasted and followed her toward the stairway in silence.

As they were about to enter the door opening on the stairs he said in boyish tones:

"Just one little favor before you disappear in that mob."

She turned toward him.

"Certainly. What is it?"

"You have the most exquisitely beautiful hand I have

ever seen. In remembrance of what I've said to you to-night, may I kiss it?"

Ellen gazed at him in surprise until he flushed with embarrassment.

"You are so sentimental."

"I confess it."

She extended her hand, he touched it with his own, bent and kissed the tips of her fingers.

"I had no idea you could be so silly," she said lightly.

"Thank you," he gravely answered.

As they entered the throng below, Lucy Sheldon met her at the door.

"If Mr. Brown will excuse you now——"

Brown leaned close to the little woman and whispered:

"Thank you, Mrs. Sheldon. I'm your debtor for life for a beautiful evening."

With a nod to Ellen he passed on into the crowd.

"Where on earth have you been?" Lucy wailed.

"On the roof again."

"At least you escaped sentimental nonsense this time."

"I escaped," Ellen admitted.

"I've the surprise of your life in store for you," she whispered. "The man of your dreams is here."

Ellen smiled indulgently.

"Lead me to him. The sight will be refreshing."

Lucy lifted her arm high above her head and waved to a dark, serious young fellow who stood leaning lazily against a balcony column.

He nodded in answer and hurried across the room.

Ellen heard his name in a sort of trance. The sight of his strong manly face and slender wiry figure had stirred suddenly the memories of childhood in Maryland. This boy looked like an old playmate except that he was dark and the boy of her childhood was blonde. Where had she seen him?

"This is my reckless nephew, Mr. Ralph Manning, who, against my advice, has left a good position in the South to butt into metropolitan journalism."

He took Ellen's outstretched hand, speaking in a rich Southern voice.

"And why shouldn't I, Miss West? If a little lorn widow like my Aunt can butt into New York and make her fortune, why can't a husky young man who is not afraid of hard work do the same?"

She made a conventional reply and continued to study the lines of Manning's face. Something in the low tones of his voice caught her heart with a queer grip.

CHAPTER III

THE MAN OF DREAMS

ELLEN'S first feeling of puzzled surprise and dimly awakened memories were followed by a sense of resentment at the consciousness of her keen interest in Manning.

She had scarcely had a moment to enjoy her triumph over the male animal when a new specimen had entered to rob her of the spiritual fruits of victory. Her victory had been complete — both over the man of muscle and the man of money.

The man of money had profoundly surprised and interested her. She had imagined him a shallow-brained nonentity. She had found his mind alert, his sense of humor keen, his character altogether human and likeable. Besides, she had distinctly felt the pull of his vigorous manhood. His enemies were constantly telling the public that he had inherited his fortune, that he was a weakling incapable of creating values of any sort, and that such a man was merely a social parasite. Having met and talked with him for half an hour she knew that these estimates were false. Lucy Sheldon might be incapable of believing the stories about his

sensual habits, but her judgment of his mind and the force of his character was nearer the truth. Her faith was profound that he was one of the brainiest men in New York, that his genius had more than doubled his inherited fortune, and that his ambitions in life were seriously to be reckoned with.

And yet she had not for a moment felt the loosening of a single rivet in the armor of her character under the assault he had so boldly and skilfully made. The more she had thought of the offer of a settlement of fifty thousand a year, a house on Fifth Avenue, and a country estate with so slight an encumbrance as this tall, handsome, smiling young sportsman, the more she congratulated herself on her own strength of character.

"Never touched me!" she mused smilingly. Nor had his offer of marriage which followed made any deeper impression, though its full import had been instantly felt. The immense social prestige which the wife of such a man would wield in the money-loving, money-worshipping atmosphere of New York was beyond question.

To the ordinary woman it would have been a physical and psychological impossibility to reject such an offer of marriage offhand. Ellen congratulated herself on the distinct advance her character had made over the average feminine mind.

All arguments against the economic independence of women were blown to atoms by this one fact. It was no longer a question of theory or a question open to argument. She knew. She felt the poise and the power of personal achievement in her position. Her heart beat high with pride—not mere pride in sex—but pride in the achievement of human character. Her outlook on life had been broadened and her sympathies deepened. Never had she felt the inspiration of her chosen career as a feminist leader so full of meaning.

Her triumph over the man of muscle had been even more gratifying. Of all the men she had met in New York, Field had really interested her most. She had read his books with profound interest. They were of the soil, rich in the deep intuitive knowledge of nature which only genius can possess. He was one of the few popular writers of the day who scorned to stoop to public taste. He wrote under the impulse of an emotion which he expressed without fear or favor. In spite of his scorn of commercial popularity his books were popular. Nor was this scorn a mere pose to gain what he pretended to despise. He really despised the man who prostitutes this power of expression in any art for the purpose of earning fame or money. He was the artist born, and his books were the genuine expression of a man who worships nature. He heartily loathed

the school of nature fakirs, and he attacked them tooth and nail, not only in his books in lines of subtle irony, but in essays of merciless ridicule, which the literary journals printed with chuckles of joy.

His pursuit of women was notorious among the set in which he moved. It often happened that a dinner given in celebration of the success of one of his books was eaten without the chief figure at the head of the table. It got to be such a joke that his best friend ceased to apologize. The dinners were gradually discontinued, much to Field's relief.

For a long time his apparent interest in Ellen's propaganda and his studied indifference to her as a woman had hurt her pride. Not that she expected or desired his attentions as a man—certainly not! And yet it had been trying to feel that her beauty, of which she could not be ignorant, had made not the slightest impression on this genuine artist and devotee of nature.

For several months he had dropped into her apartment often to inquire of the progress of her work. He was not a pronounced feminist. As an author he claimed the right of free criticism of all cults and human events. The woman movement to him was merely a world event. It could not disturb the even tenor of his intellectual life. She hated him for his pose and

yet she respected him for it. In her heart of hearts she knew it was not a pose. He had really attained the poise to which she aspired.

It piqued her feminine mind to think that he wasted so much of his valuable time in a senseless chase after first one woman and then another and yet had shown no disposition to seriously pursue her.

Something had upset his poise to-night and he had revealed himself. His hatred of Brown no doubt was the cause. The impetuous rush with which he had made love had been a surprise. She had suspected of late his growing personal interest in spite of the fact that he had used more than usual pains to mask his feelings. He had formed the habit of calling her from the iron balcony in the rear with increasing frequency. Another trick he had developed was the use of the Morse telegraph code in tapping out sentences on her wall late at night. Some of the things he had said were unusually witty and of late his messages had been coming at moments when he knew that she was just going to bed. There was nothing in these messages to suggest the sensuous, yet the fact that he was talking to her at this particular time had produced the impression that his purpose was to suggest the most daring intimacy.

To-night in his love-making he had been charged

with the highest currents of magnetism. His compact muscular body had been on fire with passion. It sparkled from his steel grey eyes. It burned in the touch of his hand. It throbbed and pulsed in the tone of his insinuating voice. For the first time in her life she had felt the fires of pent-up sex within her own body. She had studied the problem in scientific text books. She had studied it in modern physiology. She had studied it in the modern problem novel. To-night temptation had whispered into her inmost soul for the first time, and she had won. This man of genius was hers. She had but to speak and he would do her bidding. Nor had she much doubt about holding her own in the battle of sex that would follow a love affair with such a man. She was a type of woman whom he had never conquered. She knew instinctively that she could torture him with a jealousy of which she herself was incapable. His fury over Brown's approach was proof positive of this.

She had won with scarcely an effort. She smiled at her own strength and thought with a touch of pity of the weakness of man. She congratulated herself on the progress which her new creed would make in the development of the intellectual and physical life of woman. For centuries woman had been the slave or toy of man. A new era would dawn for humanity when

she could stand by his side consciously his equal in mind and body.

Her train of thought was broken at last by Manning leaning across the little table at which they were seated and asking in the most serious tones:

"I'm afraid I am boring you, Miss West?"

She looked at him a moment in surprise, blushed in spite of her triumphant musings, and hastened to reassure him.

"On the other hand, you don't know how profoundly you have interested me."

Manning laughed a sound, good-humored boyish laugh.

"You've been in a sort of trance ever since we climbed on this balcony."

"Nonsense!" Ellen protested.

And yet she was surprised to find that she had led Manning up the stairway at the rear of the living room and out on the balcony which overlooked it. The crowd below seemed the figures in a dream from which she was just awakening.

"The fact is," Ellen went on, "you started me to dreaming about my girlhood in Maryland and a fair-haired boy just like you."

"Your first sweetheart?"

"How did you guess?"

"I didn't. I just hoped."

"Why hoped?"

"You said I looked like him."

Ellen smiled.

"You're picking up city ways remarkably early for a country boy, I must say."

"Well, I was not exactly a farmer."

He paused and showed his white, perfect teeth. For the first time she became conscious of a dignity and strength she had not noticed before. Again the curious memory of her childhood returned—the memory of the fair-haired, domineering boy who had first stirred her girlish imagination—the sleepy town with its great live oaks on the shores of the Chesapeake—her unhappy father and mother, their endless bickering and quarrelling — her mother's never-ending nagging and her father's eternal martyrdom. She remembered distinctly how she had sworn never to marry this boy no matter how desperately he might beg her. To her child's mind even then marriage was the one stupid blunder she would never commit.

She had the sudden crazy idea that Manning was the reincarnation of this boy.

"A penny for your thoughts!" he cried banteringly.

Again she was roused from reverie with a start and a blush.

"Was I off again?"

"Asleep this time," he said, with a smile.

She ignored his banter and looked at him steadily.

"I could almost swear that you're my playmate and that you've dyed your hair to have some fun with me, if I did not know my poor boy had been dead ten years and I saw them bury him."

"All right, then. I don't mind your memories of the dead. I was afraid you were regretting the living from whom my indulgent Aunt had torn you."

Again she ignored his challenge to polite fencing and looked at him seriously.

"Tell me about yourself, why you came here and what you expect to do?"

"A tale soon told," he began briskly. "I was late finishing my college course—had to help send the other kids to school and keep my mother's pantry full of bread. When I did get through I was in debt five hundred dollars, which I had been lucky enough to borrow. It took me three years' hard work to pay this debt and get a hundred dollars ahead ——"

"How did you make it?" she interrupted.

"Went on the road as a travelling salesman—not very romantic for a dreamer of dreams, was it?"

"No," she answered, watching him intently.

"Well," he continued, "it was the first thing that

came and I took it. I had to pay my debts before I could play with my dreams. I've paid my debts—I've a hundred dollars in my pocket, enough clothes to last me through the season, I'm installed in a little room on Washington Square and I've the dandiest aunt in the world, who brought me here to-night and introduced me to you!"

"And what are you going to do?"

"Write editorials for a big newspaper bye and bye—made a beginning here to-night—thanks to your genius in bringing these distinguished men and women together."

"Made a beginning here?" Ellen repeated.

"Sure, thanks to you and my aunt I've just met Brown. He's a big man. I liked him right off and he liked me too—scribbled a note to the managing editor of his paper and told him to give me a chance as a space writer."

"When will you begin?" Ellen inquired.

"I've begun. I'm going to write up this reception to-night from a country boy's point of view."

Ellen's eyes sparkled.

"It ought to make good reading."

"It will."

His enthusiasm and faith in himself were contagious. In spite of an effort to dismiss the young man and

return to her guests Ellen found herself listening enraptured to the story of his ambitions and his fresh views of men and things in New York. Her guests were leaving and she was compelled at last to take her place at the door and say good-night.

Without realizing what she was doing she asked Manning to stay until the others had gone. Elated at the unexpected honor, he saw the last guest save his aunt depart with joy.

Lucy Sheldon was not surprised at his enthusiasm over Ellen, and left him with a friendly warning:

"See that your first effort does justice to Ellen West or never speak to me again, sir!"

"Impossible, Auntie," he whispered, "but I'll do my best."

For an hour after the crowd had gone Ellen listened to his endless talk as if he were an oracle delivering the last words on human destiny. Twice she caught herself in this worshipful attitude and laughed in sheer disgust, only to return to the same position of rapt attention.

He asked if she played the piano. Forgetting that it was after midnight, she sat down and played for half an hour while he bent over her in tense silence. Through the soft tones of an old-fashioned melody she caught a telegraphic message through Field's wall:

"Say, old pal, have you gone crazy?"

She stopped with a sudden laugh.

"What's the matter?" Manning asked innocently.

"Good gracious, boy, run along home!"

"Why?"

"It's nearly one o'clock. I've got a day's work before me to-morrow."

"Can I come to-morrow night?"

Before she realized the absurdity of his request and the folly of her answer she had said:

"Yes."

He seized his hat and hurried out.

"All right, to-morrow night at eight. I'd ask you to dine with me at the Waldorf, but I'm afraid I'd blow the whole hundred at a sitting."

"Good-night!" she waved from the head of the stairs.

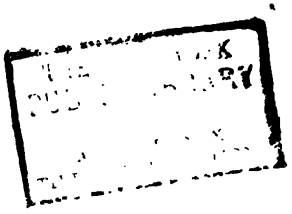
He answered softly:

"Good-night!"

It was not until his footfall died away on the last stairway that she realized what had happened. She had all but uttered a foolish cry for him to come back and stay a while longer.

In a moment of humiliating revelation it came over her—the meaning of her lapse into childhood memories — the old, old idea of having met before — her rapt

"YOU'VE BEEN IN A SORT OF A TRANCE."



listening to his boyish enthusiasm — she had fallen in love at first sight!

It was absurd. It was insane — but it was true. Instead of bemoaning her lack of poise and of character, a foolish imp inside her heart kept singing — singing all sorts of silly snatches of songs she had heard in childhood. She laughed outright at her all but resistless impulse to kiss him good-night instead of waving to him.

What an absurd ending to an evening devoted to celebrating the emancipation of woman from the dominion of man! The one humiliating and distressing thing about it was that she was not sure of the impression she had made on him. Probably nothing serious had been intended on his part by his request to call again the following evening. He was merely bent on an accurate analysis of her character for his first article in Brown's paper. The thought gave her a moment of pain that was absurd.

In spite of her self-reproaches and warnings she undressed and went to bed humming an old song.

CHAPTER IV

TRAPPED

ELLEN WEST tossed for an hour in her luxurious bed unable to sleep. The luxury of this bed was a personal fad which contradicted apparently the austerity of her views of life and yet was strictly a development of her fundamental trait. Self-development was the keynote of her new philosephy of life — the development of the individual character to the furthermost reach of every power.

Ellen possessed a voluptuous body. Its beauty was beyond question. Her capacity to see, hear, feel, taste and sniff the daintiest perfumes of the Garden of Life was a power of which she was both proud and jealous.

Life *was* a big serious problem.

But in the meantime she must *live* in order to know life's meaning — live to her finger-tips. She was doing it and she meant to continue. There were personal luxuries which added a hundred-fold to her capacity to feel and realize life. Perfect rest for her body was one of these personal luxuries.

The bed on which she slept had cost more than any three pieces of furniture in the room. The rails and

stanchions were so heavy they felt like lead. The lacquered gold on the surface was wrought by the hand of an artist into quaint, dim pictures of a dreamland mythology. This bedstead had been imported from Europe by a dealer in artistic furnishings. He claimed that it had been made by hand for an exiled king, whose love-affairs had caused an international scandal.

In half-dreaming, half-waking moments her vivid imagination had pictured the beauty of the woman for whom it had been built and wondered at the tragedy of her fate since her royal lover's exile.

To-night the magic of this bed had failed to work its spell. Its caressing touch, instead of soothing to sleep, fired her imagination to new flights of fancy and brighter visions of life.

She reviewed each article of her new creed and renewed her oath of allegiance only to come up smiling against the vital, appealing young person who had chatted to her for an hour about his unimportant self and completely upset her for the night.

What an absurd thing real life was after all! This boy was real — the real human bundle of hopes and dreams and fear and contradictions. To him the modern feminist movement meant little or nothing. It was merely a current theme about which he could write a keen satire, perhaps, and advance himself in his chosen

career. It was easy to see that he was studying her more as a specimen of the new female than as an individual girl whom he might love or hate. With his provincial education it was certain that he held the oldest old-fashioned ideas about the girl of his dreams and the home he would build — a gilded cage, no doubt, he pictured it — but still a cage.

The certainty of this old-fashioned ideal wrought into the inner fiber of his being angered her for a moment.

"Bah! what do I care what the young snip thinks!" she exclaimed.

She laughed at the earnestness of her anger, tossed the eiderdown coverlet and snowy sheets aside and sprang to her feet.

"It's no use trying to sleep, anyhow!"

She slipped her toes into a dainty pair of slippers, drew a heavy fleece-lined robe about her form, threw on the electric light and sank into an armchair beside her desk.

She had a writing-desk in every room of her studio apartment. When the spirit moved she sat down and wrote. She wrote so many hours a day, spirit or no spirit, and usually enticed the spirit to come. But it came unbidden at times and she always answered the call.

She seized a pencil and pad and wrote the heading of an essay which she had planned on the "Significance to Man of the New Woman's Demand for a Single Standard of Morals." The spirit refused to come. Her mind refused point-blank to work.

She lit a cigarette and smoked in silence. Always back to the new obsession — the dark, serious face and straight, slender figure of Ralph Manning!

She rose in rage, flecked the ashes from her cigarette and paced the floor. The cigarette burned out and scorched her finger. With a gesture of annoyance she threw it into the lacquered ash-tray.

"Of course, he'll disapprove cigarettes!"

She laughed indignantly.

"Of course — of course!"

She smoked furiously for half an hour, lighting one cigarette after another, in sheer defiance of the opinion of any man on earth.

How well she knew his moth-eaten line of argument.

"Somehow I don't think it nice for a girl to smoke."

She could hear him saying it in the old, half-apologetic way—ten times more insulting and infuriating than a straightforward denunciation. And how she hated that little word "nice"! Thank God, she

had outgrown the infantile ambition for such an extinction of character!

"Why worry over nothing," she muttered. "I can bend him to my will if I wish ——." She paused and puffed a ring of cigarette smoke toward the ceiling.

"Could I bend him?" she breathed.

Something of the ring of steel she had caught once in the fiber of his character when she had said something that squarely conflicted with his ideals.

"Would I care anything for him," she whispered, "if I could bend him as I willed?"

She tried to face the question squarely in her woman's soul and deep down found the old ideal of the glorification of strength at the basis of her consciousness of life. She could not imagine herself in love with a weather-vane. She could not imagine herself in love with a weakling, physical or mental. She shuddered at the thought of surrendering herself to a weakling.

"There!" she cried, "I've caught myself redhanded mumbling the old creed. Surrender, indeed! I'll not 'surrender' to any man on this earth, strong or weak, genius or fool."

She closed her fine, strong jaw with a snap that meant business.

It angered her to think that for an instant she had even breathed the word "surrender." For modern

woman the word no longer existed. It had been stricken from human speech.

From her self-analysis one fact emerged clearly — she did not propose to surrender herself to any man and yet she was positive that she would have no respect for the man who would surrender to her.

She faced the situation from every point of view and the longer she looked at it, the more acute became the sense of possible tragedy in her love for this boy.

The trouble was that he was no mere boy.

He was exactly twenty-seven years old. There were but five days difference in their ages. They were born in the same month, in the same year, under the same star. She had recognized the fine quality of his mind and the conquering, enthusiastic yet modest quality of his personality. She knew that he would never go backward. She knew that he would not stay long in the little room on the square. Such men were born to rise. It was written in the book of life.

The one thought that haunted her imagination and became a sickening fear was that she had been stricken with a foolish, unreasonable love for a man who would not care for her. In nothing that he had said, in nothing that he had done, in neither gesture nor tones of speech nor quiver of eyelid or lip had he revealed the slightest personal interest. And yet she had somehow

leaped to the absurd conclusion that his drawing toward her had been equally as strong as hers toward him.

She made up her mind to one thing quickly. She would set herself right on the marriage question when he called in the evening. She would express herself plainly. She would not mince words. She meant to shock him and send him about his business at once if he began to show signs of the usual masculine domineering love-making. It would be best for all concerned that she strangle the impulse to love in the moment of its birth rather than face the tragedy of quarrel and disagreement when too late.

The decision soothed her mind. She went to bed and slept five hours. She woke with a sense of freedom and elation in startling contrast to the foreboding of the hours before sleep. Her mind was fresh and every nerve a quiver with the joy of living. All sense of fear had vanished and only the prospect of an early meeting with the tall young person seemed to count.

She dressed with a langorous indifference to the call of work.

"I'll rest a day anyhow," she murmured before her mirror.

She was sorry she had worn the splendid gown at their first meeting. It would be bad form to repeat

that effective costume this evening. She had intended to buy a new dress weeks ago, but neglected it in the rush of work. She would take the day off and get it.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon before she awakened to the ridiculous fact that she had wasted a day in an idiotic search for a dress which she didn't need.

"What a return to primitive woman!" she exclaimed in disgust.

She left the store with a quick, firm decision and walked down Fifth Avenue to her apartment. In spite of her serious arraignment of her feminine weakness she was foolishly happy. She could not help wondering how many of the pretty girls she saw looking in the shop windows were in love.

To think that she, Ellen West, orator, author and leader of modern woman should fall in love with a callow country youth at first sight!

As a matter of fact, however, he was not "callow."

The word didn't fit him. He was serious. He had brains. He had a trained mind in a trained body and he was master of both.

Yesterday she would have ridiculed the idea of love at first sight as a physical and psychological impossibility. She would never have acknowledged that such

a thing could really happen to her if she were not so unreasonably elated over the disturbing and idiotic fact.

She mounted the four flights of stairs in a state of ecstasy, which gave wings to her feet.

She called her maid in tones of gaiety.

"Lay out my black jet evening gown, Dora!"

"You gwine out agin dis evenin', Miss Ellen?"

"No, silly," she laughed; "I'm going to stay in——"

She paused, leaned near the good-natured ebony face and whispered:

"Ma beau's comin' ter see me, chile!"

"Ah, g'long, Miss Ellen," the maid giggled; "you done scared 'em all ter death! I done lose heart. I don't believe you's ever gwine ter get married nohow."

"I've told you I wouldn't."

"Den what yer mean by a beau? Beau means business down South."

"So do I, chile!" Ellen cried in mocking tones. "He's a real sho' nuff, honest-ter-God beau, I tell ye!"

Dora laughed heartily at her mistress's fine imitation of her dialect.

"Den de Lawd hab mercy on his po' soul when you gets froo playin' wid him."

"Maybe it'll be my po' soul this time," she broke in seriously.

"Well, I recken not!" Dora protested.

"You never can tell, Dora; you never can tell."

She dressed with unusual care and lazy deliberation. For the first time in her life the art of dressing her beautiful body became a curiously sacred thing. She felt the strange elation which swept her heart in her first emotional experiences in the religion of her childhood. She wondered what subtle connection there could be between the impulse of love and the religious instinct.

She surveyed her superb figure before the mirror at last with a sense of triumph. The black, clinging, filmy material had completely transformed her from the shimmering silver vision of the night before.

As she studied the effects of the gleaming ivory of her perfect arms against the somber background of the dress she knew instinctively that he would like her better in it.

She was not surprised at his open-eyed admiration when he entered half an hour later.

"You'll pardon me one perfectly silly boyish speech, won't you?" he asked, smiling.

"Certainly, as many as you like."

"I hardly knew you. The effect of that wonderful black dress is really magic."

"You like it?" she asked with the pride of a schoolgirl.

"It's enchanting. It transforms your whole being. It's tragic, somber note awes me. I'm afraid to speak to you, unless you reassure me."

She lifted her finger in warning and studied him intently.

Was he in earnest? Or was he simply clever in his study of her character that his analysis might be more searching in his article. She wondered. At least she would be on her guard.

But something about his manner and his frank, engaging ways disarmed her. In five minutes she was chattering like a school-girl on her first vacation and he was delivering an endless string of confessions as if his life depended on her knowing it all at one sitting.

Only once did she remember her determination to make a complete declaration of her independence of man. It seemed too absurd to attempt to shock this charming, fresh young fellow with her propaganda to-night.

Besides, the more she thought of it, the more foolish such a proceeding would be. He might not really have the slightest personal interest in her. He, too, was bent on self-development. His ambitions were boundless. His career was the one big thing in the world. All this chatter of his might be sheer egotism. Come to think of it, could there be any other rational ex-

planation of his eager attentions? She was a notable figure in New York life. To call on her was an honor for an unknown youth. She was taking it all too seriously.

She pulled herself up with a sharp jolt and told him it was time to go.

In fact, it was time to go. It was ten minutes past twelve o'clock! Incredible! She looked at the clock a second time, unable to believe her eyes. She had thought to call the time to go as a rebuke to his presumption. It was, in fact, a confession of her complete surrender to his charm.

He rose, blushed and looked hurt. He, too, glanced at the clock.

"I beg your pardon," he apologized, "for keeping you so late with my chatter. I had no idea what time it was. I forgot that you have serious work to do to-morrow."

She held his hand unconsciously for a moment at the door and caught herself with a start. Again the utterly silly impulse came to kiss him good-night. She closed the door suddenly, shocked with the fear that she might do the fool thing on a resistless impulse.

She closed the door so quickly the young man's heart sank with the sure conviction that he had bored her beyond the hope of forgiveness.

She turned back into the room, shocked by the clear recognition of the fact that she was firmly caught in the trap — the old, old trap which nature sets for all the mothers of men!

It gripped her with a sense of strange foreboding.

CHAPTER V

THE LOVERS

ELLEN'S determination to take a day off from her work to enjoy the novelty of the new sensation of love at first sight proved a dangerous precedent.

The morning after Manning's visit her mind refused to budge. She resolutely sat down at her desk, laid out her notes, sharpened three pencils and wrote the title to her article. Nothing followed. That is to say nothing that had any value for the columns of *The New Era Magazine*. What actually followed was the endless scribbling of Manning's name. She wrote it in a smooth, flowing girlish hand as if addressing imaginary envelopes. She printed it out in pencilled type in secret correspondence. She wrote it with all sorts of prefixes — Mr. Ralph Manning, the Hon. Ralph Manning. She lingered over this one for quite a while and wondered if she would like him to enter politics. His Southern training gave him a leaning to political life. He was an orator. She had caught this from his modest account of the winning of the little gold oratory medal that dangled from his watch chain. He was a

Democrat, too, — all Southern boys who came to New York were — except a few from the mountains. This would be an enormous advantage. New York City was overwhelmingly Democratic. His culture and genius for leadership would land him at the top. He might become the Governor.

She laughed at her silly enthusiasm, and the laugh died slowly into a frown.

"No! That wouldn't do at all!" she muttered.

"A politician is a slave to convention. He dare not call his soul his own — no, decidedly not!"

She sprang to her feet with a gesture of disgust, threw down her pencil and sought a book to stimulate her mind to creative work again. Every book that stared at her from the shelves of her well-chosen library provoked an argument with Manning. They were all radical pleas for the new world in which she moved. The old-fashioned protests she had thrown away as fast as she read them. Her faith in woman had become a religion. In the fervor of her devotion she refused to harbor heresies. Any man or woman who opposed the emancipation of woman was a heretic, and their ravings in print or from the public platform were not only insults to the truth — they were crimes. She had made it a rule never to poison her soul with their venomous attacks.

Every title she read was an indictment of Manning's old-fashioned creed. Somehow this morning she resented her own radical narrow-mindedness. There were two sides to every question, of course. She must give him credit for sincerity in his views.

"Heavens, what are his views?" she breathed suddenly.

For the life of her she couldn't recall a single sentence of antagonism to her feminist philosophy. Why had she taken it for granted that he would oppose her?

The question startled.

She repeated it with fearless searching. There could be no doubt to the answer if she were honest enough to confess it. She was honest. She would confess it. The revelation had come from the depths of her woman's intuitions — her instinctive perception of the mind and purpose of her mate.

The thought infuriated her. Why, in Heaven's name, should she instinctively long for and deliberately plan to win a man who was the contradiction in creed, training, and character of everything she stood for in life?

Was it merely the old trick if nature bringing into union two people who were opposites? Or was her heart-surrender at sight to this mere man a proof of the futility of her philosophy of the economic, spiritual and physical independence of woman?

She rejected with scorn the idea of such proof. She determined to put the powers of her own personality to the test. She wanted this man. She would win him. She would beat down all opposition — no matter what the source. She would overwhelm his masculine mind with the obsession of her love. She would bring him a suppliant to her feet. She would hesitate at nothing to accomplish this complete triumph.

With him the old-fashioned way was the way to win. Of course, he would be shocked and hopelessly frightened at any other way.

She determined to drop serious literary work for a month. Fortunately, she had more than a month's work ready for the press. Her tremendous energies had far outrun the requirements of the magazine for the past year. Much of her surplus writing had been seized by the popular magazines. They had paid the top prices and she was particularly proud of this achievement; made, not because she had curried favor with the mob, but precisely because she had defied their opinions and trampled their most sacred traditions.

She would merely drop this extra work and fill her columns in *The New Era*. This would give her a month of absolute freedom — freedom to live to her finger tips — freedom to explore the soul of a man and find its inmost secrets.

She devoted the day to the careful planning of the long weeks of voluptuous idleness she would spend basking in the presence of her chosen victim. That he would fall before the assault she would make was not to be doubted. He had given too many signs of human weakness the night before. There was the barest hesitation when confronted by her creed of independence. The deliberate plan to devote a month of precious time to the old-fashioned task of ensnaring a man was undignified in a new woman, to say the least.

But the end justified the means. The test — the final moral and spiritual test of her action — lay in its purpose. If she planned to force the burden of her keep on the unsuspecting victim it was immoral by all the standards of the new ethics. If her purpose was purely one of self-development, with no intention of either selling herself into slavery or forcing him into slavery, her conscience would be clear.

Her conscience was clear. She was following a beautiful and natural impulse — the impulse of a hungry heart in search of its mate. She would live this glorious hour to its last moment of joy.

She threw every scruple to the winds and gave herself to the task of winning the man she had chosen. No art of the dressmaker, the shoemaker, the milliner, the hairdresser was neglected.

At her suggestion he formed the habit of consulting her daily about his work. Her experience of five years in writing for the metropolitan journals made her advice invaluable. He was quick to recognize this and grateful for the honor of her assistance. These regular daily visits were made in the early morning and usually lasted but an hour — an hour of real work for two artistic minds.

His first article had been printed in full and featured with illustrations for the Sunday edition. It had made a sensation both among the radical leaders of the feminist movement and among the big newspaper men as well. It had been written with the true genius of the born reporter of events. A philosophy of life ran through its witty sentences, but the play of humor took the sting from his personal opinions and made both sides to the controversy laugh.

His ambition now was to win a permanent place on the staff of the paper, with a good annual salary attached, to a chance to move up as he should prove his worth.

Their morning conference over, he devoted the day to the hardest kind of work and gave each evening to Ellen West. He was not an observant man about a woman's dress. He knew nothing of materials or the art of their making. He was very sensitive to their effects.

A joyous week had passed before he noticed the extraordinary care with which Ellen was dressing. It never occurred to him that he had caused it. To his mind it was merely the proof of her perfection as a woman. He was particularly pleased because it was proof positive that beneath all her talk of woman's declaration of independence was the soul of a beautiful and sensitive girl hungry for love. However deep might be her convictions of women's right to everything man might have fenced off and claimed as his own, he thanked God that she was not one of the feminine fools bent on making a man of herself.

Now that he had noticed the perfection of her dress and the exquisite charm with which her whole being seemed doubly charged because of it, he began to take courage. Drawn to her irresistibly from the moment of introduction, he had at first regarded her as a sort of goddess destined to dwell in the clouds above his head. For the first days of their intimacy he had not dared to think of her as a possible sweetheart. He had drifted in the resistless current which her interest in him had created, content if she smiled.

The new light of purpose began to grow in his gaze. She was quick to note it and quick to respond to its challenge.

She looked into his honest eyes with daring frank-

ness. At first he had lowered his own as if afraid he had gone too far in some word or gesture. He began to return her deep penetrating gaze with a daring that made her lower her eyes in spite of her philosophy of independence.

At the end of four magic weeks he rapped the brass knocker on her door one morning with unusual violence. The maid was slow answering the call. He rapped again with greater violence.

He heard Ellen's voice in sleepy tones:

"Don't break it down, please, dear boy; Dora's on a vacation!"

He heard her hand fumbling at the chain bolt and spoke as if for himself.

"I just can't wait, Ellen!"

He put his hand over his mouth. He wondered if she had heard his daring familiarity.

The door suddenly opened and she stepped back to allow him to enter. To his amazement she was dressed in a pale pink negligee, her expressive eyes drooping still with the languor of sleep.

Never had her tall figure seemed so lissom, the lines of her body so clear and strong and the touch of her footstep so light.

"I beg your pardon," he stammered, "for coming at this unearthly hour."

"Come in," she said softly.

"But I just had to see you and tell you first," he rushed on, unmindful of her invitation.

"Come in!" she commanded.

He blushed, and went on excitedly.

"I can't — I've just a minute to tell you that the big thing's happened."

"You've won your position?"

"Landed on both feet — the boss just called me in and told me my salary was fifty dollars a week and the job mine as long as I liked it."

"They'll give you more than that," she smiled.

"You can bet they will; but the thing is that I've landed! I'm part now of the machine whose throb stirs the world."

She caught the contagion of his enthusiasm and flushed with responsive joy as she extended her bare arm from the folds of the disturbing pink robe.

"I congratulate you."

"I owe so much of it to you," he cried.

"Nonsense; you deserve much more and it will come."

He pressed her hand with unusual firmness.

"I must hurry to the office now; may I come a little earlier than usual to-night?"

"Certainly. I'm dying to know all about it."

He pressed her hand again and bounded down the stairs.

Ellen closed the door, slowly walked back into her bedroom and looked into the mirror, her arms high above her shoulders in a lazy effort to readjust the mass of waving brown hair about to fall. She had hastily thrown it into an immense coil and fixed it with two pins before opening the door.

She smiled at the charming reflection in the mirror.

"I'm afraid I frightened the poor boy!" she murmured.

She lifted her figure with a slow graceful movement, conscious to her finger-tips of her power to charm the eye of man and lure his senses into submission to her will.

Her white teeth glowed in the dim light and her mirror flashed back the triumphant smile. The crisis had come. She knew it instinctively from the moment he had made his announcement. He had an income of $2,500 a year and the certainty of an increase in due season. He could marry on that. She read him as an open book. He rushed to tell her first because he had told her of his hopes and dreams. But the thing that gave spring to his step and brought him to her door at the unearthly hour of his call, the thing that pounded the knocker on her door until it rang like an

alarm of fire, was the possibility of telling her of his love in the good old-fashioned way.

If there had been any doubt of this in the tone of his voice, the haste of his call or the process of her analysis of his mind, there could be no doubt about it after the last look he gave her before hurrying away. There was no mistaking that look.

Now that the crisis in their lives had come it was a pretty serious affair. Sure as she felt of her powers over his physical senses, there was the steel fiber in his character to be reckoned with.

He would ask her to marry him. He would do this to-night. She felt it with increasing dread and yet she wished it with increasing intensity.

"What a fool a woman is after all!" she exclaimed. "We *haven't* evolved a soul of our own — God knows it's true!"

Not for a moment had she weakened on the fundamental test of her creed. She couldn't figure out how he would take it when she refused to marry him.

He would beg and plead and cajole and repeat himself, of course. Men always had done this — they always would. But would he take refusal as final and quit?

The thought was sickening. For the first time she began to dimly realize the tragic possibilities of the

situation into which she had allowed herself to drift.

The one thing that was now clear beyond the shadow of all doubt was that she was hopelessly in love. The passion that held her was the first great emotion she had ever experienced. It was sweeping all life before it.

She set her mouth firmly.

"In the lexicon of youth which fate reserves for a bright manhood there's no such word as fail!"

She took the pile of waving brown hair until it fell a mantle of tenderness about her finely rounded shoulders.

"Well, Mr. Armand Richelieu, I'm going to show your spirit that in the lexicon of youth which fate reserved for a bright womanhood there's no such word as fail!"

She spent the day in lazy, joyous brooding over the coming evening. She amused herself picturing his possible attitudes when he came to the crucial moment of his declaration and the proposal which she knew would follow in the same breath.

He wouldn't fall on his knees — that was certain. There was a deep vein of the romantic in his nature — and, confound it all — she admired him for it in spite of her ridicule of chivalry! But he was also endowed with a reasonable amount of common sense. She relied on this to save him in the end.

The day was warm, but not sultry — a typical, bright July day in New York, with cooling breezes sweeping the city from the sea. She planned the evening carefully and selected the exact spot for the big love-scene. It should be on the roof, with the stars looking down, and the soft splash of the tiny fountain for a musical accompaniment.

Again she wondered just what he would say — and again the foolish fear gripped her that she might lose him in the maze of her new theories of life.

CHAPTER VI

THE PROPOSAL

THE hour for his coming approached. She had planned the scene of his declaration carefully and yet the fear of a tragic outcome steadily increased.

The more clearly she reasoned out her theories of marriage, the more dangerous they became in the present crisis. Why couldn't she have fallen in love with one of the brilliant men in her circle of friends and admirers who had accepted as a matter of course her new creed of life? Why did nature persist in drawing together two people who are opposites? Another evidence of the blind stupidity of nature and the need of human genius to circumvent her clumsy methods.

Could she compromise her ideal of love and life to win a lover? To the old-fashioned girl the asking of the question was the answer. Such a problem could not exist. All things on earth, beaneath or above, for her were merged into the one supreme purpose of winning a lover.

Could she, the new woman, yield to win this man? The answer did not come as quickly as she wished. She

reproached herself for the hesitation. She faced the question of a break with Manning, and the world was a blank, her economic independence a mockery. Why have the means to live if the one thing that makes life worth the candle should be taken away?

It shouldn't be taken away! On that point she set herself with determination. She would hold her ideals and hold her man, too. If it hadn't been done yet by a woman it was time the example was set.

She sat down at her desk and made an outline of the old arguments he would advance to have his way. She carefully matched each argument with an invincible answer. He would see the logic of her position. He must see it. He had a brilliant and well-balanced mind.

She paused in her train of thought. That was just it! He did have a brilliant mind. At times it flashed a steel polish that defied the appeal of sentiment. She hated him for this masculine way of final assertion. And yet she loved him for it. What a fool contradiction!

Certainly he must listen to her. He had profound respect for her talents and achievements.

She threw fears to the winds and gave herself up to the joy of his coming. She began to listen for his firm footstep on the stairs. She could tell the sound

of it on the first flight if she stood at her door. There was something electric in its touch — a spring to his tall, strong young body that seemed to give it wings.

She looked at her watch. He was five minutes late. Her brow clouded. If some accident had happened! It was preposterous. And yet it would be just like blind fool nature to make such a tragic blunder.

"Nonsense!" she laughed.

Of course, an accident was absurd. She laughed again at her school girl silliness. It was far more likely that he was giving an extra touch to his dress to-night with the assurance of a reputable income.

The real reason of his delay never occurred to her for a moment.

She opened her door and listened for the first sound of his footfall. Ten minutes passed and still she leaned over the top rail in vain. At last he came leaping with a swift spring, two steps at a time.

Her first impulse was to run inside, shut the door and pretend to be busy. She checked herself in time to save self-respect. She loathed these primitive instincts of her sex!

She braced herself for his coming with calm assurance. He cleared the last step with a bound and barely checked himself in time to prevent a collision.

There was no reproach in her deep eyes. Only the

frank joy of his coming. He was profuse with apologies.

"I'm sorry to be late to-night of all nights. I meant to come earlier than usual. But it couldn't be helped. I'll tell you why directly——"

She smiled at his breathless earnestness.

"Come on the roof — it's too close inside," she said quietly.

He followed her in silence and took his seat beside her.

She displayed no curiosity to know the reason of his delay and let him finish his apologies without a word of acceptance or protest.

He caught her mood at last and looked at her tenderly.

"I'm glad you're wearing that black dress to-night."

"You like it?"

"You're wonderful in it. I love its suggestion of tragic things. How beautiful you are!"

Her heart stopped for an instant, as his eyes held hers in a steady gaze.

It was the first time in all their hours together that he had said a thing so directly personal. It was sweet to hear it. She smiled an answer.

A silence followed. She felt intuitively the storm breaking within his heart and the answering whirlwind

of her own soul. The roar of traffic died away on the avenue, the stars studded the arched roof above them, and the new moon hung a silver crescent on the edge of the tall tower of the Metropolitan building. The July air was softly langorous and suggestive to every sense. She caught the faint odor of the flowers in the circle of the tiny fountain and heard the dim music of its falling waters.

For the moment she was all spirit. Her soul seemed to slowly dissolve into space until she felt the joy of perfect union with all life. A cricket chirped in the privet bushes beside the chimney and waked her from the strange dream.

He was still gazing at her in silence. His eyes in the soft radiance of the stars had the look of ravenous hunger.

To her surprise he rose, suddenly drew her to her feet and without a word swept her to his heart and kissed her lips. The shock was too great for protest or response. She felt her muscles relax in his arms and caught herself. He drew her closer and kissed her again.

"You know that I love you, Ellen," he whispered.

"Yes."

"It's wonderful, isn't it, my beautiful love-woman?"

"Wonderful," she breathed.

"I thought I'd lived before. I was only born the day I met you."

His arm circled her waist and she wondered what mysterious power had suddenly struck her dumb. She had worked out beautiful speeches to make to him. They were forgotten in the storm of emotion sweeping her from the shores of time into eternity.

"My love-woman!" he murmured.

"My love-man!" she softly answered.

This time she drew him close, impulsively threw both arms around his neck and kissed him.

"Well, if that's what your new creed teaches you," he laughed, "go as far as you like!"

She looked at him with tender reproach.

"It took me a little while to get my breath," she explained. "Your whirlwind methods swept me off my feet."

"No apologies necessary, I assure you. Just make up for lost time. That's the most wonderful thing that ever happened to me on this earth—do it again!"

Her bare arms flashed about his neck and her lips found his in another kiss.

He laughed in boyish glee.

"Well, they can all have their little fluffy ingenue girls, if they like. For me, the new woman, the queen of life — my radiant, tragically beautiful love-woman!

I can't believe my eyes when I look at you to-night and think that you're mine — all mine, body and soul, mine for time and eternity."

He stopped suddenly and led her back to the settee.

"Sit down a minute," he said, "and I'll tell you why I was late."

He was fumbling in his vest pocket. Before she realized what he was doing, he drew from its depths a tiny purple box and touched the lid. On the white velvet cushion sat a wonderful ring with two diamonds. Their lustre was dazzling and from their size she knew they could not be worth less than two thousand dollars.

She gasped in astonishment.

"For a poor young man," she cried, "you do pretty well for a first visit to the jeweller."

"Do you like it?" he asked proudly.

"I adore it!"

The love of jewelry was a passion she had long regarded as her besetting sin. She had religiously suppressed her desire to indulge it. Her fingers touched the sparkling stones.

"How did you do it?"

"That's why I was late," he answered eagerly. "My mother left me her earrings in her will. It was all she had from the wreck of the Civil War. I kept

them sacredly for the woman of my dreams. I had them set for you. The jeweller was a little late finishing the ring. I couldn't come without it.

He drew it from the box, slipped it on her finger, bent and kissed it.

She flashed it in the starlight.

"Isn't it beautiful?" she cried.

"Not half so beautiful as the light of your eyes," he whispered. "How soon will you marry me?"

She continued to look at the ring as if enchanted.

"Let's marry right away," he pleaded.

She held the ring up in the reflected light from the windows of the big building opposite and studied it.

"To-morrow night would suit me," he sighed.

Still no answer.

"All right," he said softly, "you name the day."

It was no use postponing the inevitable. It had to come. They must fight it out here and now. She faced it resolutely.

"I can't marry you, my love-man," she replied seriously.

He took her hand to draw her into his arms and hush her silly talk with kisses, but caught the look of tragedy in her drawn expression and stopped short.

"Can't marry me?" he repeated slowly. "Is there another?"

She smiled.

"There is no other man, there never has been, there never will be——"

"And you love me?"

"It's just because I love you."

"You won't marry me because you love me?"

"Exactly."

"Don't make me laugh," he cried. "What sort of joke is this you're trying to put up on me?

"I was never more serious."

"You can't be!"

"You have read my book and my essays on marriage?

"Sure."

"Well?"

"What of it?" What's your book on the 'Modern Woman Movement' to do with your personal life?"

"My book is my life — the revelation of the best that's in me."

He threw up both hands in a gesture of impatience.

"Not at all. Your book is the propaganda of a new religion. You are its high priestess. You're preaching the faith."

"But I mean it."

He laughed lightly.

"My father was a clergyman. Your writing on that subject gives me exactly the impression which his sermons used to make on me. I scandalized the entire family one day at a dinner. My father had just thrilled the assembled guests with a story of personal experience. I looked at him a moment in open-eyed wonder and quietly asked:

" 'Is that *so*, papa, or are you just preachin'?' The people laughed and my mother sent me to bed. Your theories about marriage are all very well for the consumption of radical thinkers. But for you to apply such things to your life to-day — nonsense — it's unthinkable — you, my love — my life — my beautiful goddess!"

"That's it. I refuse to be a goddess. I'm going to be just a human being. Every human being should have an equal right to develop and exercise his or her capacities. My life is an end in itself. I have only this one to live. I must live it as completely as possible. A woman has the right to her own soul. I wish to see life with my own eyes, not through the eyes of a husband. I will not be a mere female. I insist on having a soul. I refuse to be the mere matter on which the will of man acts and reacts. Marriage reduces woman to this. Marriage is the death of personality for women. Marriage is the death of love

for most women. I demand and I will have the poetry of love — or I will have nothing. I loathe the kept woman — wife or mistress. I refuse to use my sex for economic purposes. Marriage is a trade in which a woman practises the art of sex allurement to make a living off men. I don't have to stoop to such a trade. I have one ——"

Manning broke into another laugh and seized her hand with rough command.

"Stop this foolishness, my sweetheart. You're talking from books ——"

"I'm giving you my deepest soul conviction."

"You're quoting a lot of rubbish you've read. I've read some of it myself. Preach it if you wish for future generations to think and dream about. When we all go to heaven and sprout wings it may come. But down here in this sinful world you're going to be *mine* — do you hear?"

He leaned close and caught the perfume of her breath as her bosom rose and fell with sudden emotion.

"I will not be your slave!"

"But I must protect you, my dear," he pleaded.

"Protection means that a man buys love and a woman sells it. I will not depend on my sex for a living."

"Who asked you? Go on and make as big a salary as you wish. We'll keep it for the children," he interrupted smiling.

"The economic use of sex," she went on earnestly, "in wife, mistress and prostitute is the cancer eating at the heart of society to-day——"

"Please don't, dear," he begged, "you're quoting from your new books, I tell you! What has all this to do with you and me? We love one another. We've got to get married——"

"That's exactly why we won't get married. We will preserve our love from its blight — its dull stupidity, its lack of reserve, its ugly hours of everlasting boredom. For example, you might snore or I might snore. There are a thousand and one petty annoyances which daily contact brings to two positive personalities. The moment I realize that you are *mine*, I am no longer yours; can't you see this?"

"I can not!"

"Well, I do," she insisted, "and I'm going to save you from the great curse. I assert the right of free thought against the stupid creed of authority. I preach and propose to practice the love of my dreams. I will have nothing less. I claim the right to serve society with my love according to my own choice and the right to use my love in my own way. This is best

for society, because only thus can I attain the best that is in me."

He lifted his hand impatiently.

"You reject my love, then."

She flushed and was silent for a moment studying his sensitive, mobile face. Never had she seen him quite so handsome as in this crisis of deep emotion. Never had she seen him more completely master of himself. It was this poise under the stress of the storm that disconcerted her as she faced the full declaration of her principles and her plan of action.

If he had exploded in protests or lost his head in impetuous pleading she might have felt her ground more secure. But he had done nothing of the kind. His words had been dropped one by one as if he were summing up the facts rather than pleading:

"You — reject — my — love — then ——"

There was not even an interrogation point at the end of the sentence. It was ominous. An iron will slumbered beneath the smiling quiet of his character. She felt its hard grip on her nerves.

The silence lengthened. A moment's cowardice struck her heart. He was waiting her answer, his eyes searching her soul for the deep things of life.

"You know that I love you," she faltered.

"Then how can you refuse love's right to its own?"

"I do not refuse."

"You have refused."

"No ——"

"You will not marry me."

"But I shall love you forever!"

"And you ask me to cherish my love as an empty dream and never build the home that's in my heart?"

"Your love shall not be an empty dream."

"It will be without you."

"I'm going to be with you," she whispered softly.

"Then we must build our home."

"Why?" she asked earnestly. "This old-fashioned home of which you dream is the mortal enemy of every woman who aspires to a conscious soul."

"You can't believe such rubbish!" he interrupted.

"I not only believe it, I know it," she went on eagerly. "I was born and reared in one. My father and mother were human beings outside the 'home.' The moment they crossed the sacred threshold they each were possessed of at least seven devils. 'Home' was the cave removed from the interference of the police in which they could, at their leisure, tear each other to pieces. And they did it regardless of my feelings."

"But such unhappy marriages are the exception."

"They are the rule, if the truth were known! The

reason we don't hear the noise of battle is that the woman makes no cry. My mother was made of different stuff from the average. She could endure only so much and then she saw red, and when she did the male animal in her way had to pay. The one dream of your heart is a home?"

"God never made a real man in whose breast it wasn't planted."

"And you never dreamed there might be something nobler, something finer, something more beautiful?"

"Never," he answered sharply.

"And yet, you think for a minute," she argued tenderly. "The dull round of uninteresting work in the home to which the woman who marries is sentenced for life is more hopeless and nerve-wracking than the task to which a convict in prison is assigned. This joyless, stupid toil robs her of individuality, all power of original thought, and strips her of every chance of self-expression and development."

"Self-development? Great Scott!" he broke in, "doesn't every woman express herself in her children?"

"No more than every man. Is man content with such self-development as he finds in his children? No. Each human being must live his own life within or die the living death before the grave. I am a human being, dear man! Let me be human. I will love you

with a love that is deathless, because humanity is immortal. Why must you condemn me to a life of penal servitude because we love each other? This 'home' in which you propose to confine me in shackles will steal the light from my eyes, put out the fires of intellect and rob me of every grace and beauty which I possess. It will unfit me to maintain myself an equal whom you can respect!"

He listened intently, his face a mask.

"I don't regard you as my equal," he answered slowly.

She stiffened the slightest bit.

"You couldn't with your ideals ——"

"You're not my equal," he went on evenly. "You are my superior. I know this by the deepest intuitive knowledge — the impulse to worship which steals into my heart with every thought of you. I refuse to degrade you with a cheap masculine equality. I refuse to love my equal. I must love and worship with the same heart-beat ——"

"But I don't want to be worshipped!" she cried.

He seized her hand with cruel force.

"I don't care what you want! I'm going to have my way. I adore you and I'm going to keep on adoring you! The home is the temple in which I propose to build the high altar of this religion as old

as the beat of the human heart — you can't escape me — you are mine!"

"I'll not try to escape you, love-man!" she whispered tensely. "But I shall not allow you to bind me with chains."

"I'll kiss the chains that bind me to you," he interrupted.

"I can't," she persisted. "I can't even wear this ring you have brought with so many beautiful thoughts and such sweet and utter sacrifice ——"

"You can't wear my ring — why?"

She drew it slowly from her finger and held it in the soft light.

"Because it is the symbol of ancient slavery"; she paused and kissed it.

"I kiss it not in submission, but in joyous freedom as I return it to my glorious lover. Love's freedom for me means the freedom of enduring love. It neither asks nor expects sign or symbol."

He leaned close.

"In heaven's name, what do you propose to do with me, then?"

She flushed, silently slipped the ring back into his reluctant hand, gripped it in both hers, kissed it passionately and fixed her deep eyes on his.

"What am I going to do with you?" she slowly

repeated: "Love you always. Even in all ages and climes women of beauty and genius have done what they pleased. I'm going to do what I please; not in wilful disobedience to law, but in obedience to the highest within me. Marriage is not the creation of law — the law is *its* creation. Even historically free marriage is the real marriage. The public celebration of a wedding is already becoming a vulgar spectacle to the new conscience of the world ——"

She paused and pressed his hand tenderly. She felt him growing cold. She felt him slipping away from her and gripped his fingers desperately.

"Well, go on," he said gently.

She braced herself.

"When two intelligent human beings wish to be together," she whispered gently, "no bond is needed; if they do not wish to be together, why chain them?"

His jaw snapped with firm decision.

"And you think me dog enough to consent to such a degradation of your life?"

"I hold such love the supreme glory of life!"

"And yet the man who dared offer such love to my sister — I — would — kill — him — as — I — would — a — rattlesnake!"

He stopped suddenly and drew her head to his breast.

"Dear sweetheart, forget your madness; I couldn't

let you do this insane thing — you know it! I take your offer as the supreme expression of a great and beautiful love. I'm not worthy of it. I would be still less worthy if I listened for a moment."

"But you *must* listen, dear love-man!"

"I will not."

"I can't be your slave."

"I beg to be yours!"

"Then do as I command you."

"No."

"Then you're not my slave?"

"In my own way."

"But I don't like your way. I dislike the domestic habits of man. They are intolerable to my self-respect."

The nerve tension broke at last. He laughed, deliberately took her in his arms and kissed her passionately.

"You sweet, adorable bundle of contradictions!" he cried.

"I can have my own way?" she asked demurely.

"You can not!" he replied firmly.

"Then it will never be!"

He left her standing at the head of the stairs repeating her decision:

"Never!"

He waved a last good-night, blew her a kiss, and said:

"Will be back to-morrow to arrange for the ceremony!"

She turned into her room with a sickening sense of defeat.

CHAPTER VII

THE BATTLE

ELLEN felt her way into the room and sat down in the dim light of the street lamps. She loved this quaint apartment. Five years of strenuous work within its walls had given to it the power of restoring tired nerves and toning the fiber of character. The front half of the floor space was devoted to the one large livingroom with three windows opening on Fifth Avenue. The ceiling was unusually high and a gallery with white spindles and mahogany rail circled the two sides and rear end of it. From the balcony in the rear the doors opened into two bedrooms and beneath them on the level of the living-room was the dining-room, kitchen, pantry and maid's room.

Each piece of furniture was selected with care and expressed some mood or fancy of her vivid imagination.

The walls of the living-room were in brown leather and the furnishings suggested the library and sitting-room combined. The walls for the first four feet up were lined with books — every inch of the space taken with the cases even at the turn of the corners and beneath each window.

On the floor was a rich brown carpet, with an oriental rug here and there to break its wide stretches of plainness.

The quiet dignity of the room soothed her. She walked to the window and looked out on the brightly lighted square. The electric hand of the clock in the tower pointed to eleven. He had gone unusually early to-night. By all the laws of love-customs he should have stayed unusually late.

"Stubborn mule!" she muttered. "He thinks I'll give in, of course; we'll see!"

The window was up full height and through its wide space came the faint call of the cricket in the little privet hedge on the roof above.

The cricket's chirp recalled her tumultuous emotions of the moment when he had swept her into his arms and kissed her lips. How long ago it seemed! She had lived years in the two brief hours. The memory of his kiss stirred now with a strange maddening thrill.

Something new had awakened into being within her body in that first kiss — something sweet and wonderful in its power to torture. She realized it with a sense of joyous awe — the grip of this force on her life and character.

She was stronger because of it. Of this she was sure. New power to will had throbbed within her from

the moment of its first call. She breathed deeply. The dimly lighted room with its leather walls and row on row of books gave back her cry of personal triumph in the struggle. This room was hers. No man could claim or dominate it. Here her imagination had found its wings and soared in joyous freedom.

"I'll keep that freedom too!" she snapped. "The man who enters here shall come as my comrade and equal—not as my lord and master!"

Strange that this passionate wilful being which his kisses had stirred into life within should turn thus on its creator! And yet it was so. Life began to take on new meanings. Never had it seemed so sweet — its mystery so exhaustless. For the first time within memory had the full import of sex consciousness dawned. It brought new dignity and strength.

"My man can not resist me!" she breathed. "I'll win. I'll have my way, not his."

She mounted the short flight of stairs, threw on the light in her bedroom and undressed with a lazy consciousness of power — power to think, to will, to execute her will. The touch of the luxurious bed soothed her vanity. She was mistress of her own life. She had developed the strength to fight and win the first battle for the supremacy of personality. She would win the next one also.

She awoke next morning strong and elated. She caught herself singing again.

"Well, why shouldn't I sing!" she muttered. "My man I've found. He's fine and strong. His mind is keen. His will is stubborn. But I like it. I'll bend him to mine ——"

She paused and laughed softly.

"Away with doubts and fears; I can twist him 'round my little finger when I am ready."

She dressed with unusual care. Her bath was a religious ceremony. Never had she been so conscious of beauty or so proud of its power. She would use it to bend the man of her choice.

She began to write again at nine o'clock. Her mind was clear, every faculty alert, her imagination aglow. For two hours her pencil flew over the clean white sheets of paper. She thoroughly enjoyed work.

She paused for a brief rest and thanked God for the gift of expression. Above all she thanked Him for the independence of man which it had brought her. But for this she could never have resisted the temptation to accept the support of Manning by trading on her sex. How degrading the thought! How could any woman with a soul trade on the mysterious and beautiful impulse that thrilled her being now with inspiring power?

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She renewed her vow to lead the revolution for the emancipation of womanhood. She vowed anew to demand and secure the vast changes in the social order which this emancipation would mean. The revolution which she would lead would summon millions of sleeping souls into vivid conscious life.

The sharp rap on the brass knocker of her door was unmistakable. It was the nervous call of Lucy Sheldon bent on some important mission. She had heard it before. She heard it now with dread. Of all the friends she had made in New York this demure little woman was her most loyal adviser in every trial. To-day she would resent her advice. She was the most provoking of all the opponents of the radical program. She had the power to provoke because she had been so successful in her career and yet held to her old-fashioned ideal of the home and home life with dogged persistence. She believed in woman's right to develop her powers to the highest reach of their capacity, yet held with the tenacity of fanaticism to the principle that she must develop as woman, not as man, — that she is fundamentally different. And that feminism must contribute something new to humanity because of this fundamental difference. She was an ardent believer in the cause of woman's suffrage because she believed that the mind of woman should supplement, not supplant,

the mind of man in solving the problems of state. She believed that the salvation of the world awaits the universal training of womanhood to rear a nobler race of men.

Ellen knew her arguments by heart and she was sick of them because she had found no answer satisfactory to her own inner sense of logic and right. She knew the line of argument this morning and resented it more fiercely because its point would be so intensely personal.

Could Manning have made her his confidant so quickly? She would resent that too. Perhaps he had only hinted at the truth. She flushed at the thought of another woman's knowledge of the daring proposal she had made to her lover. In the next breath she reproached herself for such inconsistency.

"Why should I resent my best friend knowing it if I'm going to defy the world!" she mused bitterly.

She was still busy with her resentful thoughts when the sharp rap was repeated with greater violence.

The maid was still out of town. She sprang to her feet at last to answer the knock. Perhaps her fears were vain after all. It was not probable that Manning had gone so far as she feared.

She opened the door smiling and Lucy Sheldon entered with merely a nod. She had always insisted before on the habit of kissing her. It had always annoyed

Ellen. She had submitted to it under protest. But her love for the older woman was too deep for little differences of habit to seriously jar. This morning she resented the omission of the kiss with genuine anger. It struck her with the force of a blow. The hidebound little fool had already assumed the air of superior virtue at the bare thought of the proposal to her nephew!

Ellen looked at her in hurt surprise, her hand still on the door.

"Shut the door!" Lucy commanded sharply.

Ellen closed the door and moved toward the armchair in which her friend usually seated herself for a chat beside the desk.

Lucy Sheldon's eyes sought hers with a look of yearning tenderness. A smothered cry of pain suddenly broke the silence and she threw herself into Ellen's arms sobbing.

For a moment the two friends held each other. The older woman touched the flushed young cheek. Her slender fingers trembled with the caress of a mother.

"How beautiful you are this morning, my dear!" she faltered.

Her first words were so unexpected they brought a feeling of uneasy surprise. There would be no stormy argument. Her tactics would be more difficult.

Without response she led Lucy to a chair.

"Sit down now and tell me all about it," Ellen said briskly.

The older woman looked at her through her tears.

"Oh, how could you, my child! How could you!" she cried.

"Perhaps I haven't yet," Ellen laughed.

"But you will. I know how stubborn you are—unless I can stop you."

"What has he told you?" Ellen asked sharply.

"Not much. But I know you so well that I put two and two together and I understood. The poor boy was so distressed, so heart-sick that I dragged it out of him piece by piece until I got the whole truth."

"He'll come round to my way of thinking."

"Never!"

"He will."

"And if he does," Lucy fiercely declared, "he'll be no kinsman of mine. I'd never see him or speak to him again."

"Nonsense, my dear, I shall assume the full responsibility of my revolutionary conduct. A leader must lead. I shall lead in this and he will follow."

"You will deliberately seduce him into such a crime?"

"Deliberately."

"It's incredible!"

"It's not. You believe that I'll do it, or you wouldn't be so distressed, you dear old conventional bugbear!"

Lucy's eyes were blinded with tears.

"You will dare to live with your lover without a marriage ceremony in defiance of law and society?" she asked at last.

"I will," was the firm response. "In the desert of this money-grubbing, sex-trading metropolis, I'll create an ideal world for two or die in the effort."

"You'll die in the effort."

"All right, I'll make it easier for the next."

"You'll make it worse, dear, foolish child of impulse. You're mad. Your cry of personal freedom has led you into anarchy pure and simple — anarchy and the grossest materialism."

"The highest idealism," Ellen interrupted.

"Ideal fiddlesticks! You have misread the history of women and the history of the race. Man did not create monogamic marriage ——"

"No, the devil did it!"

Lucy ignored the interruption.

"Woman created monogamic marriage by the slow, painful process of thousands of years of struggle with man's unbridled passions. Man is normally by sex-instinct a polygamous animal. Out of the bog of his promiscuous impulses woman has led him by the tender-

ness of her devotion into the establishment by law of a social order which protects her in the rearing of her young. You propose to destroy this."

"I propose to re-establish it on a higher, nobler plane."

"By restoring to man his license to roam the fields again a mere animal — a beast."

"He roams to-day in spite of bonds!"

"The law will always be defied by the lawless, while it binds silent millions. You're absolutely crazy, my child! Marry my nephew as he asks you and he'll be your loyal mate for life. He will never lift his eyes in lust or love to another woman. I know him. It's in his blood. A finer breed of men were never born. The home instinct that God has planted in his soul and generations of pious beautiful mothers have cherished is the finest thing in him. And he never will be happy until he realizes it. You may wreck his life, but you will never destroy that craving. He will wreck your life through it."

"I'm not afraid," she said defiantly.

"No. You're just mad with this obsession of individual freedom."

She paused, leaned closer and continued in low tones:

"The modern woman doesn't refuse to marry. She doesn't get the chance to marry. This is the cancer

that's eating out the heart of our social order. The advantage of marriage is all woman's. The freedom you propose to give is unfair to you. It's acceptance by any man would be a cruel injustice."

"Your fine nephew has rejected it with scorn."

"Of course he did. He wouldn't be my nephew if he hadn't. He's my brother's son. My brother would have killed any man who made such an offer to me."

Ellen smiled and lifted her head.

"Yes. He also told me he would do as much for any man who offered this ideal to his sister."

Lucy straightened her slight figure.

"I'm proud of him for saying it."

"Which only shows that neither man nor woman is yet civilized."

"Exactly. That's why you'd better think before you leap all the way back into barbarism at one bound. It's bad enough as it is, God knows. You propose to aggravate the disease to effect a cure. Come, my child, forget your theories for a moment and exercise a little common sense. A true study of human society reveals certain facts. God made woman as the supreme instrument for the perpetuation of the race and the saving of all that man has achieved in the centuries of the past, by passing it on in the culture of the child. A man under normal conditions marries because he wants a woman.

A woman marries because she wants a child. A man seeks the woman in his wife. A woman seeks the child in her husband. A woman lives through her children — a man through his work. You propose to seek a man in your mate and ask the man to seek only the woman in this free alliance. Your chief aim in life you make your work. You must destroy or crush down your instinct for children. With the child as the bond your man will remain faithful for life. Without it, his eyes will continually roam the world in search of other women, because the supreme law of life has been defied, not fulfilled."

"He wants me — not the child," Ellen maintained.

"Certainly, you simpleton. Man's sex-impulse is overwhelmingly stronger than woman's. He may not even desire children in the beginning. But nature has seen to it that he cannot live without wanting a wife. It is her business to supply the children."

"All right!" Ellen replied. "I propose to meet this grave responsibility in my own way and gauge my conduct by higher ideals than moth-eaten customs. I propose to rear a nobler race of freemen than the world has yet seen. I accept my duty to society as paramount. I will be the guardian of the race-body and the race-soul. But I will be responsible to myself — my inner, noblest self. I will not be a slave. I will not sell

my sex for my keep, either in the bonds of matrimony or the bonds of the kept woman outside of marriage. I will not be a parasite. I will not obey any man who walks this earth. If I must be the mother of men, I will be their equal at least. I will be freed from conventional slavery. I will be freed as woman from the dominion of the male. I will rise a full human being or welcome extinction!"

"But can't you see, dear heart," Lucy pleaded, "that your ideal is purely masculine? You are merely demanding the right to make a man of yourself! The way of human progress lies in exactly the opposite direction if woman is to contribute anything to that progress. Nothing can be gained toward lifting the human race to a higher plane by merely multiplying the number of men. We must improve the breed of men. This can only be done by woman remaining a woman to the highest reach of development. Woman's organic constitution makes her utterly unlike man. To follow man's idea would be the most fatal blunder. You wish to live the same life and do the same work as man merely to demonstrate that you are a human being. God called you to live the highest life of which woman is capable; to lead the way for a higher order of human beings. No freedom is worth achieving for woman unless it be to follow her own nature. The free alliance you propose

to your lover is not the creature of woman's imagination. It was borrowed from the masculine mind in the frantic effort of the modern woman to be a man!"

Ellen stubbornly shook her head.

"But how can the mere trick of a marriage ceremony perform the miracles your ideal demands? If I love Ralph Manning I will love him no more, no less, ten minutes after the officer of the law has pronounced us husband and wife. If he is mean and stingy, the ceremony will not make him generous. If he is noble, it will not make him ignoble. If he is a criminal, it will not cleanse him of crime ——"

"No," Lucy broke in, "but because he is a man who has inherited the finest instincts of his ancestors the magic of that ceremony will fix his habits for life. Habit is character. On that home building character the whole structure of civilization rests ——"

A soft rap at the door interrupted her.

Ellen searched her friend's face for an explanation. The truth had flashed into her mind instinctively.

"You told him to come this morning?" Ellen asked.

"Yes. I told him to fight it out to-day, dear. I've tried to help him."

She rose timidly and drew closer.

"You don't resent it?"

For the first time in her life Ellen slipped her arms around her friend's slender waist and kissed her.

"Certainly not, you dear old thing; I feel as if you were my aunt now, besides the very best friend I ever had in my life."

"You'll listen to him?"

"Of course, I'll listen."

"And be sensible?"

"Surely," she smiled quizzically.

Lucy kissed her impulsively.

"Good-bye, dear, it's no use to argue with you. Convince a woman against her will — she'll be of the same opinion still."

Another gentle rap at the door reminded them that a mere man was quietly waiting their pleasure.

Lucy quickly opened the door.

"I've done my best, boy," she whispered, "you'll have to do the rest."

"I'll win, never fear," he replied in low tones.

Lucy waved another farewell and hurried away.

Manning advanced smiling.

"Well, I told you I'd come again to-day."

She met him half way, devouring him with her eyes.

"My love-man!" she cried.

"My love-woman!" he whispered, taking her in his arms.

Their lips met.

"You'll fix the day?" he asked.

"To-day, if you like."

He suddenly held her at arm's length.

"You mean it?"

"Yes."

He swept her again into his arms.

"You make me the happiest man on earth."

He paused and smiled into her flushed face.

"I'm afraid that remark is not strikingly original!"

"And I'm afraid you don't quite understand me," she said, releasing herself from his arms.

"I do," he answered promptly. "You've just promised to marry me to-day."

"But in my own way."

"My way is the only way, dear heart!"

"We'll have as elaborate a ceremony as you like," she went on evenly, "provided you don't bind me with legal chains."

"But that's exactly what I demand," he insisted. "I want the chains double riveted and I want handcuffs on both my wrists as well as on yours. The chains can't be too strong to suit me."

"You refuse me?" she asked sternly.

"I refuse to degrade the woman I love."

"Can you think of the wonderful thing that is drawing our souls and bodies toward each other as degrading?"

"No, but the world will call it so and I will be responsible for your misery."

"I defy the world."

"Knowing the world better than you do, I decline to aid you in the defiance."

She drew close.

"You can deliberately repulse me when I offer you my soul and body?"

"Under such conditions, yes."

She drew back with sudden passion. Her voice was husky.

"All right, you can go, then; I will never see you again!"

He looked at her in surprise.

"You can't mean this."

"I do."

She lifted her hand to wave him to the door and it dropped as if her strength had failed.

Quick to catch the significance of her weakness, he followed her eagerly.

"You can't be such a fool," he cried angrily. "I

won't listen to you. I'm going to do the thinking and the acting for us both in this crisis. You've read a lot of radical rubbish and taken it seriously. You've written some brilliant essays on the same line and hypnotized yourself into the idea that you really believe the stuff you've written. You don't. You can't. It's crazy nonsense when you try to live such theories in this world. And this is the world we've got to live in now, you know."

"That's just why I'm going to live my life in the light of my ideals," she broke in. "This old, sin-cursed, sneering, practical, material world needs the inspiration of high ideals. We have more than enough practical materialists. You are going to join me in my holy crusade against sham and humbug, lies and slavery."

"I'm going to marry you according to law," he growled.

"You will not!" she snapped.

A long silence followed. The man and the woman held each other in a steady gaze — will clashing on will in a determined fight for mastery. There was no sign of weakening on either side. Her figure slowly stiffened and the chin rose in defiance.

With a gesture of anger he seized his hat and hurried to the door.

"It's good-bye, then?"

"You're saying it," she answered stiffly.

"All right," he responded in tones so low they were scarcely audible.

The door closed softly and Ellen sank into a chair with a sob.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FLESH AND THE DEVIL

THE reaction from the strain of her fight with her best friend and lover left Ellen West in a condition of collapse. The bitterness of the first big defeat in her impulsive life was sickening

"The fool — the conventional weakling," she exclaimed in disgust.

Her sense of humiliation was keen. She had offered herself in abject submission — to give herself freely without condition to a man who had refused to take the gift. It was maddening! That her beauty had fascinated him she knew by intuition keener than reason. And yet her charms had fallen short of victory.

Her soul rose in rebellion against the shame of his rejection, of his assumption of moral superiority.

"His ignorance and stupidity!" she hissed.

Waves of helpless anger swept her. And yet the more she considered his stern refusal the more reasonable and honorable from the man's point of view it seemed. In spite of her creed a sneaking admiration persisted in the back of her indignant mind.

At last this admiration dared to come into full consciousness. She stamped on it with indignant fury. Her anger at her own inherited weakness was even greater than her wrath against the man who had rejected her generous offer.

"It's true!" she muttered. "Woman has no soul — she's merely a mass of gelatine on which the will of man acts and reacts. I'll die before I'll submit!"

A faint but distinct tap on her wall from Field's library stopped the train of her angry thought.

He had rapped many messages during the past month and had called many times from the balcony rail in vain. She had forgotten his very existence in the unfolding of her love for Manning.

She listened with an amused smile.

"This is old reliable, fair lady," he was saying. "Every day I call in vain. Have pity, pray! Your humble slave awaits you on the backyard fence — your faithful Tomascat!"

She rose with a light laugh, walked to the rear window and looked out.

He had just leaped on the balcony rail. His imitation of a cat was perfect.

"O-o — Maria — M-a-r-i-i-a!" he called.

"Come over, Tomascat," she answered, "and cheer me up!"

"I come on the run!" he cried as he leaped from the rail and re-entered his apartment.

In two minutes he was at her door.

"You needn't apologize, Ellen," he began.

"I'm not apologizing, sir!" she answered quickly.

"I say you *needn't* apologize for your shameful treatment of the man who really loves you. I know all about your dreadful carrying-on with that other fellow."

She waved him to a seat and sat down facing him.

"And from the length of your face this morning I can guess the ending of the sad story."

"Indeed?"

"Oh, yes indeedy," he continued glibly, "for the past month I've held myself aloof."

"Quite so; you've only rapped once a day."

"Exactly. I used to rap twice. And, moreover, I used to come right up and knock at your door with or without an invitation at times. Not once have I done this in thirty days. I repeat, I have held myself aloof, not because I feared the outcome of this interloper's attentions, but because I thought it best to let the affair run its course — as in measles and all immature love."

"I like that!" Ellen broke in.

"I'm glad you do. I hoped your mind was still sufficiently alert to get it. Still, you never can tell. The kind of affair in which you have been floundering has a most benumbing effect on the female mind."

"Thank you!"

"Don't mention it. No fee expected. My advice is purely friendly, not legal. Would you mind telling me the exact stage at which you have arrived with our young friend of bucolic aroma?"

She looked at him a moment defiantly.

"Not in the least. We have declared our love. He asked me to marry him. I refused and offered myself without a marriage ceremony."

"And he indignantly refused?"

"He did."

"I knew he would — the poor rube. And I have come into the kingdom for such a time as this! I alone can save you from folly. You are, after all, dear Ellen, supremely feminine in your attempt to claim the privileges of man ——"

"You're a liar, Randy ——"

"I deny the allegation, but I will not spurn the 'alligator'! On the other hand I draw nearer. I make myself plain. You refuse my offer of a free alliance?"

"Indignantly."

"Just so; although I am your comrade in creative

art, our tastes are similar, the fiber of character the same ——"

"I don't love you ——"

"You say that because you don't know the meaning of love. There is no true love save the love of comrade and workers. All else is blind impulse. The impulse to be a father — the impulse to be a mother, ——"

"Pish — tush!"

"Pish — tush yourself! I'm telling you the deepest secrets of human life. You believe in a free alliance. I offer it. I am a philosopher of artistic and creative calling. So are you. We are perfectly fitted for happiness in each other's society, in each other's love. You reject me like a silly school girl — why?"

"Because I don't love you — fool!"

"Because you don't love me in the idiotic way of the old romantic poets — the way the boy loves, for example. He swears to make you a goddess and will end by making you his slave."

"I'll never marry him!"

"Legally, no. You have worked out a logical creed of individual freedom from purely legal restraints, but what you're really trying to do is to bind him and bind yourself with a new and more aggravated form of matrimony."

"What do you mean?"

"Simply what I say. That the tyranny into which you would lure this poor simp is more 'holy,' more 'sacred,' more galling in its chains than the old ceremony. In it you have raised the old ceremony to the nth power."

"Our love would be as free as the beat of the human heart."

"But you propose to so smother the human heart in the intimacy of this personal freedom that it can't beat. You forswear the chains of matrimony for a free alliance whose tyranny you intend to make ten times more tyrannical than the old conventional marriage. Why an 'alliance'? An alliance is made of agreements and promises and obligations. It's just another kind of iron-clad marriage you're trying to impose on the world in the name of freedom. It's a fake, child — a rank fake. Come, have common sense. You and I are mates, in mind and body."

She shook her head.

"It's true. I offer you the real free alliance without bonds, without promises, without agreements. I offer the glory and beauty of love without chains of any kind. We will work together. We will roam the fields together. We will think high thoughts and do great deeds in creative art as chums and comrades without fighting, hating, or quarrelling or getting on one

another's nerves. Divest yourself of the obsession of sex. Woman will never be free as man until she does this. Use your magnificent sex endowment as an inspiration in life. You are still making it the supreme end of life. You understand me?"

"Yes — go home, Randy — you tire me."

"All right. I've told you the truth. Remember old reliable is your neighbor. I'm your best bet in life. I recommend myself highly ——"

"Go home!"

With a grin and a friendly nod he left her brooding.

CHAPTER IX

A BROKEN WING

FIELD'S bold plea for the flesh roused Ellen's deepest emotional revolt. Her first impulse was to strangle the cool, smiling tempter.

On reflection, her philosophy of life forbade such violent attempts to force another human being to think as she thought. Absolute freedom for each individual human soul and body was the one principle on which she was building the structure of life and thought.

The man of Field's daring, promiscuous impulses must of course be controlled in the new moral world in which the words husband, wife, parent, and child would become legally obsolete. Just how this could be done presented to her mind a problem. There must be a solution. There could be but one. He must be controlled by love. The magic glow of her passion for Manning warmed her heart with sudden tenderness. Such love was the solution of every problem of human life.

She rose with renewed courage to fight for her ideal and live or die by its standard.

She set herself resolutely to work. The first days

of her separation from Manning passed swiftly. She literally buried herself in work. She was surprised at the strength and exhaustless vitality of her imagination under the new inspiration of love. She worked as never before — eight, ten, twelve and at last fourteen hours a day and stopped at midnight with stores of energy still untouched.

Manning would call before the end of the week. Of that she was sure. She felt no serious uneasiness until Saturday afternoon.

"A very wise young man!" she exclaimed.

She watched the hands of her clock slowly move to three. He had never failed to call on Saturday afternoon before three.

A sudden panic seized her. Could he toss her aside so easily as a vain and worthless experiment? It was preposterous. His love was the real thing. She felt this with unerring certainty. Her intuitions were too keen to make a mistake about a thing so vital to her happiness.

She seized the telephone to call the office and ask for him.

"I'll not humiliate myself!" she groaned.

She slammed the telephone down with such violence the receiver fell off the hook.

And then the ridiculous side of her rage suddenly

dawned. Why should a full-grown woman, who claimed equal rights with man, in all things on the earth above or beneath it, attempt to play the coy maiden who sits patiently at home and waits to be courted by her mate?

"Bah — such nonsense!" she cried.

She seized the telephone boldly and called Manning's office.

"Mr. Manning is not in!" sighed the telephone girl.

"Not in?"

"Not in."

"Where is he?"

"In Chicago, on business for the paper. He told me to tell any one who might call that he would be gone a month."

"Thank you."

The conceited young ass had expected her to call and she had! Served her right for being such a fool. Well, the lesson was needed and she had gotten it — straight between the eyes.

Lucy Sheldon would know all about it, of course. But she wouldn't ask her. The little match-making minx of the old marriage régime had no doubt planned the whole thing and sent her handsome nephew away on the trip in order to bring her to her senses. She resented the assumption that she had parted with her senses.

"Fools," she muttered, "I'll show them two can play the game."

A low muffled tapping on the wall stopped her angry arraignment of Manning and Lucy.

Field was calling again.

It was uncanny the way he would call at the moment when her mind could least resist his wit and insolence.

"Come out on the balcony, Fair Ladie, I've somewhat to say to thee!"

She walked to the window and found him climbing out.

He waved a jovial salute.

"I'm lonely, Fair Ladie!" he called.

"So am I, rude man!"

"May I come over?"

"No."

"Then you'll come over here, perchance?"

"Perchance — I will not."

"Walk with me, then, through the woods on the Jersey hills — my car is in the shops."

"All right; I'll meet you downstairs."

The stroll through the deep-wooded cliffs of the Palisades soothed her anger. The lines of the city's tall buildings were half smothered in a haze that melted into clouds and made it seem unreal. There was no hurrying, rushing, maddening New York. It was only a dream. The woods and sky and water and rocks

and birds were realities — all else myth. Even the man beside her, who persisted in his idiotic determination to carry her across the rough places, was a fiction.

Altogether Field seemed the most unreal thing in the universe to-day. She had accepted his invitation to test the strength of his appeal to her. Now that she was alone with him in the deep woods there was no appeal. His chatter about love and comradeship and high achievement fell on deaf ears. Her soul was a thousand miles away.

"That's just it!" she breathed, "exactly a thousand miles away, in the smoky city by the lake!"

She stopped suddenly.

"It's no use, Randy," she said forlornly. "You bore me dreadfully to-day."

"Bore you?" he repeated in surprise.

"Yes. Forgive my plain speech. But I'm in love."

She sat down on a rock and looked up into his mocking eyes through a mist in her own.

"In love with a doggoned, stubborn country boy who insists on his own way and I won't have it, that's all — I won't have it!"

Her hat had fallen from her hand, and her lips trembled. Field shook his head and touched her hair gently.

"Better let him have his way, child."

"Never!"

"It's best for you."

"I'll die first!"

"You may die for it anyhow. As well first as last."

"I'm no weakling and you know it."

"No, but you're the marrying kind and don't know it."

"I'm nothing of the sort!"

"The only difference is you're trying to invent a marriage chain warranted never to break."

"Shut up!" she snapped.

Field threw up his hands in full surrender.

"We return then to the haunts of man where your grief may flow unchecked to the sea?"

"Forgive me, Randy!" she cried suddenly.

She shook the spell of her emotion from her, sprang to her feet and roamed the woods with a free careless joy that surprised her companion.

"By George, you amaze me!" he said at last.

"And why?"

"You're a wonder," he replied, shaking his head. "I'm more in love with you than ever."

"It's no use — forget it."

"It may be no use, but we'll not forget it."

They reached the paved road along which automobiles were whizzing in both directions as a classy little roadster passed with a pretty girl alone at the wheel.

"Sensible girl!" Field sighed. "She owns and drives her own car, fancy free ——"

"And roams the world seeking whom she may devour, no doubt."

"Possibly."

"She caught your eye, I noticed!" Ellen laughed.

"Never touched me!" he protested.

"You can't help it, Randy, any more than you can stop your breathing by a moral resolution."

They walked to the ferry in silence the greater part of the way. It wasn't necessary for either to talk unless they wished.

Ellen had formed a sudden resolution that absorbed her. That car was a good idea. She had always longed for the freedom which such wings would give. With it she need not be incumbered with a love-making man. The woods and fields and long, winding roads would be hers. She had money enough now to own one. The fresh air would restore her poise and self-respect.

Early Monday morning she bought it and devoted the afternoons of the entire week to lessons in driving. She was an apt pupil. Her strength and cool brain soon gave her quick mastery of its every mood. By the end of the week she was sweeping over the hills and valleys of New Jersey with the ease of a veteran.

She took Field for a spin on the following Sunday.

He was fascinated by her skill and sureness of touch.

"I'm glad I noticed that girl in the car," he said musingly.

"Why?"

"Otherwise we wouldn't own this one, would we?

"We would. You flatter yourself unduly. I had made up my mind to buy the car before your slow eye had even caught the swish of the girl's veil in the wind."

"The times are out of joint!" Field sighed.

"What's the matter with them?"

"The girls are getting too swift for my clumsy ways."

Ellen laughed heartily.

Field touched her gloved hand.

"Keep your hand off my wheel!" she commanded sharply.

He dropped his hand like a naughty schoolboy who felt the teacher's rule.

"Yes, Ma'am!" he sighed.

She permitted him to go to the garage and watch her give orders to the attendants. He walked home with her in an unusually thoughtful mood. They paused at the doorway downstairs. He looked at her earnestly for a moment.

"You're not fooling me a little bit," he began slowly, "with all this rush of new experiences and excitement outdoors. You're just trying to hide the hurt inside.

It's not the way, my comrade. The way to forget a lover who is unworthy of your love is to accept the one who is. Come, be sensible. Keep your freedom and yet sweep the gamut of human passion and human emotion. You and I can form a true alliance of free comradeship. We have similar tastes and ideals. We work at the same divine art — the big creative art of letters. We live side by side. The secret of our love will be our own. Let's marry to-night with the free ceremony of the new thought and the new world."

She shook her head.

"It's a waste of breath, Randy."

"Why — why?" he pleaded.

"I — don't — love — you ——"

"I'll teach you how ——"

"No, my man of mind and muscle; you learn to love through your senses — woman only becomes sensuous when she loves. I want my own man now and I'm going to have him."

Her lips suddenly closed in grim resolution. She pressed Field's hand, nodded good-night and rapidly mounted to her apartment.

She was glad he had pressed his suit at that crucial moment. She had reached the depths of despair to-day. Never had she felt so keenly her loneliness and the humiliation of defeat as in the instant of parting at the close

of the day of excitement. Nothing could have so cleared her mind of cobwebs as Field's straight appeal to her senses.

Her course was clear as day. She would throw her silly pride to the winds, court her lover and make him her own! Why not, in heaven's name, if she claimed equal rights with man, should she not choose her mate, pursue him openly and win him in a fair fight?

"I can do it and I will!" she resolved fiercely.

She called Lucy Sheldon and asked her for Manning's address. Incidentally she learned much of deep interest about him.

"No, he didn't run away at all, you silly goose," her friend answered. "Brown sent him to Chicago to report a sensational trial. It's the chance of his life. If he lands it, his salary will be doubled."

"Hasn't thought of me once?"

"I oughtn't to tell you the truth, I suppose ——"

"Please."

"You don't deserve to know it, but he's been unutterably miserable. My letters have been his only comfort and I've had to tell him the truth about your scandalous flirtation with Field."

"How dare you!"

"It's the truth and you know it!"

"It's false and you know it!"

Lucy laughed.

"I'm so glad to hear your indignant denial. Of course, I haven't written him about it. I've just been sick over it myself."

"Thanks for your lofty opinion of me."

"What else could I think with your crazy ideas of freedom and your crazier ideas of marriage?"

"He has been unhappy?"

"Miserable."

"I'm glad. I'll write him now just what I think of him."

"Do; he'll be very happy if you tell him the truth."

"You're hopeless, Lucy."

With a bang she hung up the receiver and hurried to her desk. Her letter to Manning was brief, but it made him foolishly happy.

In a room at a cheap hotel, buried in papers, his hair dishevelled, and his collar discarded, his shirt unbuttoned, he was working with tireless energy when the bell-boy pushed open his door. Furious at the interruption he glared at the intruder.

"What'ell, Bill!" he growled.

"Special delivery, sir," was the drawling reply.

Manning leaped to his feet, his heart beating fiercely. He had felt it coming for the past twenty-four hours — a foolish buoyancy had braced him in his work. He

had begun to think he had recovered from his wound. He seized the letter and saw her smooth, fine handwriting. A special delivery stamp on it, too! He read it at a glance.

DEAR LOVE-MAN:
Please hurry home. I can't live without you.
Always yours,
ELLEN.

He kissed it, laughed and kissed it again.

"That's what I call a real love letter!" he exclaimed rapturously.

He finished his work the following day and caught the Limited for New York. With every click of the swift flying wheels over the steel rails his heart beat a responsive love-note. She had surrendered her foolish whims. They would be married now and the real life of serious achievement begin.

CHAPTER X

THE EAGLE'S NEST

FROM the moment Field's final proposal had cleared her mind, Ellen West never faltered in her purpose. She knew exactly what she was going to do and set about it.

Her plan demanded a certain amount of fencing with Manning, which was not to her liking, but it couldn't be helped. To let him know her real purpose would be a fatal mistake.

It required all her tact to prevent an explosion the day he arrived. He bounded into her room as if shot out of a catapult. He had all but swept her into his arms before she could stop him.

"It's all settled, dearest," he cried, "isn't it?"

"Not exactly," she faltered.

"Then what did your letter mean?"

"Just what it said."

"It said everything."

"No, it didn't. But I meant every word of it. I can't live without you and I don't intend to try. You must come to my way of thinking or I must come to yours — in the end — don't you see?"

"I see that you must come to my way because there is no other when a decent fellow loves a true woman."

"We'll grant all that for a moment, but while we decide who shall yield on this all-important issue, why quarrel? I refuse to quarrel. I love you. I must see you and I will if I hunt you down in your office and sit on your doorstep in the twilight — do you hear?"

He smiled boyishly.

"Then I'll have my way in the end."

"If you can, all right; stop sulking now and be a good boy. Come to see me — laugh and talk and work with me as you did once. While we fight it out, surely we can be good friends, can't we?"

"Of course!"

He grasped her outstretched hand and held it firmly.

"But I've no rights as an accepted lover under such conditions," he went on. "It wouldn't be fair. I refuse to take advantage of your foolish ideals. I'm not your accepted lover until you promise to marry me. We're just good friends and pals — you understand my scruples?"

"Certainly," she answered, with a flush. "I haven't asked you to play the rôle of fiancé, have I?"

He lifted his finger.

"You said we wouldn't quarrel."

"Nor will I," she agreed. "Friends and pals it shall be for evermore ——"

"Until you're mine!" he responded gravely.

For a month not a day passed without his hour of conference in the morning and his evening in her library or on the roof. Theatres, concerts, receptions — all were tabooed. His salary had been doubled and his responsibilities were increasingly grave. She bent every energy of her intelligence to the guidance of his work. Her intuitions were uncanny in their accuracy and he studied her with increasing admiration as a creative genius entirely apart from his growing love.

His personal attitude he held within the strictest bonds of conventional friendship. He made a solemn vow never to kiss her again or take her in his arms until she promised to marry him. It was a point of honor. He held it with Spartan sternness. She knew the process of his reasoning and accepted his stubborn insistence on the old code as part of his fundamental character.

She felt the daily resistless growth of his fascination. He couldn't keep his eyes off her. He could hold his hands and put down the impulse to kiss her lips, which she communicated to his sensitive mind with deliberate alluring suggestion, but he could not control the telltale look out of his eyes. Again and again she caught

him looking at her with a longing that was agony. And she knew that she was winning the battle with his iron will.

At last his longing was more than he could endure in silence. He seized her hand with trembling violence.

"You can't go on torturing me like this, my sweetheart. We say we're friends. We know we're not. You can't keep this fight up against every impulse of body and soul ——"

"I'm not keeping it up!" she interrupted.

"Of course, you are," he protested. "I'll marry you to-night ——"

"I'll give all to-night and scorn the chains of slaves!"

"But you can't live to yourself or die to yourself. We live in the world and we're part of it. Your creed is anarchy."

"I'll tell you what we'll do," she interrupted; "we'll run up for the week-end to see a friend of mine in a quaint log cottage in the mountains. Close to the heart of nature, we'll face this thing for two whole days and fight it to a finish one way or the other — what do you say?"

His face brightened at the prospect and then clouded.

"I can't get off the paper."

"I'll get you off."

"Then it's a go."

Without delay she pulled the strings with the managing editor and secured Manning's release for the two days, Saturday and Sunday. He also consented to waive the Friday afternoon preceding. She had taken no chance of refusal at the office. A brief telephone call direct to Brown had turned the trick.

The two days intervening, Wednesday and Thursday, she spent in preparations. She devoted the entire time to the coming event. She was too busy for a meeting with her lover.

To his urgent plea for a chat or a walk or a ride in the little roadster there was but one answer:

"I can't, man. I'm too busy training for the coming bout with you. I'll see you Friday afternoon at exactly four o'clock at my place on the avenue. Don't be late a second."

"I'll be waiting on the doorstep!" was the cheerful response.

At exactly two minutes before the appointed hour she swept against the curb in the trim little car. He threw his grip in and sprang to the seat.

"You're all ready?" he asked.

"Yes."

"No baggage?" he enquired.

"My friend has everything I'll need. I'm at home up there."

The car swept down the avenue, turned into West Twenty-third Street and in a minute swung into Eighth Avenue.

"Which way?" he asked.

"The Weehawken Ferry to the Palisades and the road to Bear Mountain."

"Bear Mountain — that sounds good!" he said, snuggling against her a little in spite of his Spartan resolutions to maintain the strict basis of friendship.

Ellen turned a radiant smile on his face that fairly blinded him. The ease with which she handled the car in the crowded streets of New York was a constant surprise. The machine seemed a part of her very heart-beat. Machinery was something he had never tried to understand. He had no desire to monkey with it. He regarded a woman who dared to handle it as a sort of super-woman. He was not surprised at Ellen. It seemed the natural thing for the self-reliant leader of the modern crusade to put her hand on the throat of an automobile and run it as she pleased.

He submitted himself to her authority as a chauffeur without question and in perfect confidence. He was sure that she knew exactly what she was doing. But when it came to submission to her leadership in life in the big issue of a home — well — that was an-

other question. He renewed his resolutions to boss that job in his own way.

The beauty of the woodland roads along the Palisades and over the Jersey hills and valleys was a constant surprise to his keenly awakened senses.

"I had no idea this country was so beautiful!" he exclaimed with delight.

"It's more beautiful to-day, I think," she said demurely, "than ever before."

"I wonder why!" he laughed.

He thoroughly enjoyed the wonderful drive. The long stretches of smooth road overlooking the Hudson with its silver mirror reflecting the dark green hills and mountains sent the blood tingling to his fingertips.

And the soft touch of the woman he loved close beside him was the magic that gave new meaning to it all. He had viewed beautiful scenery before. Never had it affected his spirits like this. He half closed his eyes. The throb of the engine seemed the beat of the heart of a great eagle. They were flying in space with the quiet beautiful world stretching in silver and green below!

Beyond Nyack the hills grew into mountains and the quiet beauty into rugged grandeur. A great awe filled his heart.

His hand moved toward hers involuntarily. He stopped himself in time. It was certainly no place for spooning when your girl held the wheel of a little racer making forty miles an hour over a dangerous mountain road.

Besides, it would have been a terrible break in his resolutions. She would have had the laugh on him, to say nothing of the sharp rebuke he would have gotten for imperilling two lives.

He straightened himself and frowned. He began to foresee danger in this high altitude. He wondered what sort of cottage it was, how many people in it, how many servants, and what their chances would be for the long talks of which he had been dreaming. It would certainly be a mess if they should be so petted and coddled as star guests that they could have no time to be alone.

He glanced at Ellen's flushed face and saw a smile playing about the corners of the sensitive mouth. He was reassured. She had too much common sense to lead him into a crowd of chattering idiots. He threw off his fears and his heart began to sing its old love-song with a new sense of triumph.

They swept suddenly into a beautiful park, swarming with thousands of merrymakers.

A steamer had just tied up at the pier and three

thousand people were pouring from its side and streaming up the steep hill.

"For the love o' Mike," he cried, "have we slipped a cog and run into Coney Island?"

"Heaven forbid," was the laughing reply. "This is Bear Mountain. New York is just beginning to know about it."

"What in heaven's name is it — a beer-garden?"

"No, my ignorant youth from the country; it's a great Inter-State Park, comprising thousands of acres of wild mountains, rivers, lakes and endless reaches of wooded hills."

The car stopped at the signal of a traffic officer to let a crowd cross the road. They were a jolly lot — lovers, lovers, lovers, endless processions of lovers. Some were holding hands, some were shy, some laughing, some in the depths of their first quarrel — but over all the spirit of joy brooded.

Manning caught the contagion. It went to his head like wine. He laughed in spite of himself.

"Shall we stop and take a spin on that lake over there?" he asked.

"No; we haven't time. It's a long pull up our mountain."

Something about the way she spoke the words "long pull" caught his imagination and fired it with happi-

ness. It would be wonderful to take a long pull away from the crowded world into the deep shaded gorges of the mountains with the woman he loved! He began to picture the narrow mountain road.

In half an hour they were on it and he smiled at the inadequacy of his effort to imagine half its charm. Up and up and up the narrow thread wound beside the deep gorges and over the crests of the lower ranges and up again, always up, to greater heights.

She swung the car right or left at each cross road without a moment's pause.

"You've been here before?" he observed.

"I've walked it a dozen times."

"Alone?"

"Once or twice."

He sighed and wondered who was with her the other times. A very disconcerting sweetheart, this new, wilful, headstrong, self-poised modern woman! He couldn't help wondering for just a moment how far she had allowed men of Field's type to go with her. He dismissed the ugly thought with indignation. It was absurd. The woman by his side was as pure as the breath of this mountain air. No matter how foul the atmosphere of the great city in which she lived, about her always was the living charm of a clean heart.

He began to feel the exhilaration of the high altitude

in quickened pulse. It sent the blood to his brain in waves of boyish joy.

He crossed his arms to keep from touching her.

"I'm foolishly happy," he observed with a grin.

"I knew you would be," she replied.

"Nobody seems to live up here," he remarked as they turned another ridge and swept the inspiring panorama of three ranges. "We haven't seen a human in five miles."

"That's why it's worth the climb."

"And only two automobile tracks on the road that I can make out."

"There isn't much travel on this trail," she admitted.

"It would be a joke if your friends should be away."

"Would you mind much?" she inquired archly.

He hesitated.

"Only for your sake."

"You surely couldn't think that I would mind."

"It would be against your religion, wouldn't it?"

"I should feel disgraced if I were upset by a little thing like that — if my love-man were with me."

The last words were spoken in a lazy tenderness that found his heart.

"Hush — you make me forget my resolutions."

"So soon?"

"Yes. If I don't do better than this I can see my finish in the two days' fight we've planned."

She fixed him with a tender look, and he turned to the scenery for relief. She knew that he didn't mean quite that. She knew that the iron will still slumbered beneath his light banter and yet she sang for joy that he had even toyed with the idea of surrender. He had played with it — otherwise such a remark would have been impossible.

She swung the little car straight to the right and flew down a long, straight stretch of road leading directly toward the river. Through vistas of overhanging boughs he caught the flash of its waters in the distance.

The car suddenly curved into an open space on the cliff and shot into a garage perched on the rocks between two trees. He could see that the rear windows looked out into space. Beyond it lay the sheer precipice of the mountain-side and the wide reach of the Hudson.

"We're here!" she cried joyously.

"Where on earth's the house?" he inquired anxiously.

"We'll find it all right," she answered, "unless a slight earthquake has shaken it off into the river during the night."

His curiosity was excited. The stillness of the place was uncanny. It seemed a thousand miles from a human habitation — not a sign of a cat or a dog, or a chicken about it.

"Come on!" she cried.

He followed her down a narrow path between huge boulders, beneath giant trees for two hundred yards and crossed a laughing brook. The pathway followed the edge of the stream for two hundred yards more and suddenly stopped before a log cottage built squarely across the brook.

He stood entranced.

"Isn't it beautiful!" he exclaimed. "It hangs on the very edge of the cliff, too. And the brook makes a bridal-veil falls as it dashes into foam over the rugged ledge!"

"Yes; listen," she whispered, "you can hear its weird music."

He stood still for a moment and held his breath. The music of the tiny falls came faint and low like an echo chorus to the babble of the brook over the rocks at their feet. A slight mist rose white and ghost-like from below.

"It's a fairyland," he breathed.

"Come in," she said simply. "My friends are on a visit to some neighbors. They didn't expect us so soon.

I came an hour earlier on purpose to have it all alone with you in your first impressions."

The door was unlocked and they entered the spacious living-room. At one end stood a huge fireplace built of boulders. Toward the cliff, overlooking the river, three large windows were cut, with a couch seat projecting into space. It was piled with pillows and from its inviting perch entrancing views stretched in three directions — across the river to the hills beyond — up the river's edge, over which hung still higher, darker mountain peaks, and down the river through endless, sunlit stretches of water and white, gleaming villages along its banks.

He sat down in the window and gazed in awe.

"It's wonderful!" he exclaimed at last.

"Drink it in," she responded cheerfully, "while I get something to eat."

"Good; I'm starved!"

"Make yourself at home," she called from the kitchen. "Clark, the president of my company, used to pay the taxes on this place, but I own it. They don't stay here enough to know what it's like."

Through the rapture of his soul, bewitched by the wonderful view, he caught enough of her chatter to know that all was well, and he could dream undisturbed for a brief while. He abandoned himself to the spell.

He looked at the inscription over the big stuffed eagle perched on a bough above the mantel — "*The Eagle's Nest.*" He felt himself an eagle resting for a moment high up on the overhanging cliff. A new sense of freedom and power welled within him. The call of elemental things throbbed in his veins. He felt for the first time his kinship to the wild, free world whose inheritance still beat in his blood.

The sun was setting in a riot of gorgeous colors reflected in the great silver mirror below. He was surprised to see the gleam of red and yellow in the tall tree-tops. It couldn't be possible the leaves were turning thus early in September. He looked closely and found it was true. He felt the first tingling breath of fall in the air.

He turned instinctively toward the fireplace and found to his amazement that a glowing blaze of logs had begun to brighten the room. The table was set before the fireplace and he smelled a hot dinner. He looked in surprise again. How long had he been dreaming?

He sprang to his feet. The people had probably come and entered by the kitchen door.

"Ellen!" he called.

"Yes, dear!" came the cheerful answer from the kitchen.

"Can't I help you?"

"Yes. Find your room — the first door on the left, next to mine, and wash your face and hands for dinner. Hurry up, like a good boy, now. It's all ready."

He hurried into the tiny bedroom. The furniture held him in spite of his desire to make haste. The bed was built of peeled logs. The bureau and chiffonier and every piece of the same. The effect was charming. He imagined himself a clumsy young eagle rummaging about in a nest of dry sticks somewhere in the clouds.

Everything about the place seemed to aggravate the sense of boyish exhilaration which he felt with increasing intensity.

"It's the high air, of course," he mused, "but I'll swear I'm a little drunk."

To his surprise he found running water in the set wash-basin and two faucets, hot and cold, and each of them in perfect order. Of course it was easy to pipe it from the hill above and the fire in the kitchen range accounted for the flow of hot water.

He changed his collar and cravat and brushed his suit with care. The folks had come. Of this he had no doubt. He would meet them at dinner. They were certainly a quiet couple. He couldn't wonder at that. Human beings could not live in such air and not be born again.

As he emerged into the living-room, prepared to receive the formal announcement of his name to the host and hostess, he stopped speechless at the vision which greeted him.

Ellen was just entering with the tea tray. A more bewitching picture never met his eye. She had removed her corsets and slipped into a dark, blood-red negligee trimmed in black fur. The snow-white neck and shoulders framed in low V-shape setting flashed a living ivory. Her cheeks were red. Her eyes sparkled with mischievous happiness. Ringlets of waving brown hair hung about her face in tantalizing beauty.

"I sincerely trust," she cried, "that you duly appreciate the honor I am paying to mere man by playing the humble rôle of cook to his majesty!"

He stared, transfixed in amazement.

She busied herself with the tray, placed the service for two, and hurried back into the kitchen for the dinner. His eyes followed her with eager admiration. She walked with a sinuous grace that was bewitching. Never had he realized the stunning beauty of her superb figure as in the simple drapery of this blood-red, fur-trimmed robe.

He was still dazed by the vision when she reappeared with the loaded tray, her eyes laughing at his embarrassment.

"His majesty displeased?" she inquired.

"I'm dumb," he gasped; "dumbfounded, keeled over, completely knocked out!"

"Say not so, dear boy, say not so!" she laughed. "I pride myself on my cooking. On one point, at least, I'm the incarnation of your old-fashioned housewife. I will say that the man who marries me will get a good cook. You should collapse after the meal, not before."

"What on earth will these people think when they pop in and find that we're running the whole place to suit ourselves?"

"And what care we? I told you that Clark used to pay the taxes, but I own it — didn't I?"

He glanced uneasily at the door.

She placed an armchair at the table and drew another opposite.

"Dinner is served, your majesty!"

She made the daintiest bow, Japanese fashion, and spread her arms in mock obedience.

"I'll wake up in a minute!" he sighed.

"Please don't."

They sat down and looked into each other's faces in silence, smiling. His expression of boyish humor slowly deepened into tender appeal.

"Dear love-woman," he began slowly, "you don't

know how this picture overwhelms me. It's the dream of my soul — the sweet intimacy of this life within the prison of four walls with you! Can't you see it my way, dearest?"

"Perhaps I do — only with clearer eyes and deeper insight into realities," she responded gravely. "You like this rustic furniture, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Why? Because it suggests the freedom of an eagle's nest in the tree-top. I like it, too. Were we married, every piece of furniture in our establishment would be so many links in the chain that bind two slaves to eternal servitude."

"I'd kiss the chain which bound you to me and me to you for life."

"I think you've said that once before — and you mean it now. You'd think so until you feel the chains begin to gall the bruised flesh. Can't you understand, dear man, that a woman who has once felt the throb of a conscious free soul cannot allow herself to be classed as your property, your home, your ox, your ass?"

An impulsive answer moved his lips, but the words died unspoken. She was so radiantly beautiful it was a sacrilege to cross her.

"I'm hungry," he complained.

She smiled triumphantly and poured his tea. Through the long wonderful hour at the table no word of argument broke the spell. They talked of trifles — the mountains, the hills, the majestic river, the peace and quiet of the eagle's nest.

She watched his face intently, and wondered what tumult was raging within and at what point the storm would break. That a storm was brewing she could feel with increasing intensity. She caught it in the little nervous twitching about the corners of his mouth and a new fire that glowed in the depths of his eyes.

She was not surprised at his sudden move at the end of the meal. He rose abruptly and paced the floor, his hands gripped behind his back. He paused and looked through the open window at the shimmering surface of the river, lighted now by the rising moon. A cricket chirped in the chimney-corner. A breeze stole through the screen door from the south laden with the odor of flowers.

He stood for five minutes without moving a muscle. She watched him with increasing uneasiness, rose and slowly moved to his side.

"Of what are you dreaming, my love-man?" she whispered.

His eyes remained fixed on the moonlit river.

"Of you."

A warm soft hand found his and held it close.

He looked into her eyes intently.

"Your friends are not coming," he said.

"No."

"You knew they were not?"

"I knew."

"You think it's all quite fair?"

"They say that all is fair in love and war — were you thinking of yourself or of me?"

"Of both — of you first."

"I am of age."

"I doubt if I am responsible to-night."

"I am."

"Whose cabin is this?" he asked suddenly.

"Mine. I bought it last week."

She felt his hand close on hers in a grip of cruel strength. She strangled a little cry of pain.

She lifted her head in a movement of pride and spoke with even deliberation.

"Our position here to-night is an advance in morality — not a lapse. We seek the reality, not the shadow. We scorn the letter of an outgrown ritualism. The murmur of the brook beneath our cabin is our wedding march ——"

She paused and the soft music of the waters stole through the silence.

"The mist of the fall is my bridal veil ——"

She felt his trembling arm slowly circle her waist. He drew her close and their lips met.

CHAPTER XI

THE SECRET

THE first problem confronting the great adventure was the question of publicity. They discussed it seriously on the iron settee beside the fountain on Ellen's roof Monday evening when they came in from dinner. They had unconsciously stumbled on the crux of the marriage problem.

Ellen was emphatic in her views.

"I loathe the idea of a public announcement of so intimate a personal thing as the union of two human beings in love. Why must our sisters and our cousins and our aunts and the great unwashed public break into this, the sweetest and holiest hour of all life, with their grins and jokes and cheap congratulations? What business is it of theirs? It's our life, not their's."

"True, dear love-woman," he answered seriously, "and yet in a very real sense, the record of the establishment of a family is the most important piece of book-keeping human society ever makes. If the family is the unit of civilization ——"

"But it's not in the new civilized world in which modern woman proposes to live. We proclaim the era

of universal democracy. We proclaim the advent of woman as a conscious human being possessed of an individual soul."

"All right; it's nobody's business then but ours."

"Certainly not."

"Only, I've an old-fashioned hatred for sneaking and secrecy," he admitted.

"You think that secrets are degrading?"

"I've sometimes felt that way."

"Secrets are degrading only to shallow and untrained minds."

He broke into a hearty laugh.

"God knows, mine has been shallow at times and it's yet untrained."

"Come, now, vain creature, don't pin bouquets on your manly chest with your left hand while you scorn them with your right! Your mind is not shallow and you know it. Your mind is trained and you know it. Your feelings are simply the inheritance of centuries of foolish teaching. It's our business to teach the world the truth about our bodies and our souls. Secrets are not degrading. I never lived as deeply or as keenly as I did the week I was preparing that little cabin for our honeymoon. Did you feel the contaminating influence of my deception?"

"I don't know," he fenced. "I felt two white round

arms slipping about my neck closer and closer until at last I couldn't breathe!"

"Which is precisely as God ordered it should be. You're my man and I'm your woman. My arms were made for your neck. Our secret makes life dramatic."

"Quite so," he observed, "if my Big Boss Brown ever finds out that I have won you ——"

"But you didn't, dear boy, I won you."

"Well, have it your own way. If he ever finds out that you're mine ——"

"But I'm not yours."

"No?"

"No; I'm as free as a young eagle and so are you and so you're going to be to the end of life."

"All right, then. If he ever discovers that you've kidnapped me ——"

"Well, I like that!" she protested.

"I'm trying to say it your way, anyhow, if he ever finds out our secret, I'll be looking for another job."

"Pish-tush!"

"You know that he's in love with you."

"Who cares?"

"I'd like to give him notice to keep off the grass."

"You would, eh?"

"Surest thing you know. It's devilish awkward, such a secret."

"We'll not announce our wedding."

He seized and kissed her impulsively.

"Let's do it, sweetheart; let's go right now and have the old-fashioned ceremony just for the sake of our own peace of mind. I want to tell the world you're mine and I'm yours for time and eternity. Confound them all, I want 'em to know. I don't want Brown making love to you again. I don't want Field pecking on your wall or Bridges making calf-eyes at you ——"

"Did a marriage ceremony ever stop that sort of love-making?" she interrupted.

"It will break it up for a while, anyhow, until the habit becomes fixed and that fixes life. Habit is character, honest to God it is. I want you to get the habit of utterly loving me without the thought of another man. Then it'll come easy and the habit will stick. I want to get in the habit of loving you with utter devotion. When I get the habit it'll stick for life — I'll go on about my work and not know that another woman lives."

"Rubbish, man, if you want another woman I'll not want you."

"I can't honestly say as much," he protested. "I want you with a passion that hurts and I'd come pretty near wringing the neck of any man who dares to make eyes at you now."

"Jealousy's the most degrading of all human passions. I'll never stoop to it," she broke in dreamily.

"Well, I may. I'm just common clay when it comes to that, and I've a pretty strong idea that I'd fight for my woman."

"Listen to the Big Chief again — 'My Woman!' Haven't I told you that I'm not *yours?* That you're not *mine?*"

"Theoretically, yes," he admitted. "But, by the Lord, you *are* just the same and you know it."

He drew her to his heart with passionate tenderness and smothered her protests with kisses, until she lay in his arms without a struggle.

"A secret, then, it shall be, if you wish it, dear love-woman," he said at last.

CHAPTER XII

PROGRESS

THEY were on the way to the Eagle's Nest to celebrate the first anniversary of their union by the new free ceremony of the waterfalls when it happened — the discovery of their secret.

Lucy Sheldon had not suspected the truth. She had mildly reproached her nephew for his slow love-making. She had broadly hinted to Ellen her opinion of a woman who dallied so long with a man and never landed the game, but the self-poised young leader of the new revolution never batted an eye. The subject was dismissed without discussion.

It was at Manning's urgent request she had not made his aunt a confidant. He knew with instinctive dread that such a revelation would bring an estrangement beyond repair. He loved her devotedly and shrank from facing her over such an issue. It would be cowardly to plead that he was not responsible. By the old code man is always responsible. The simplest thing was to keep a close mouth with Lucy Sheldon. This they had carefully done.

The drive had been delightful. A thousand tender memories crowded each turn of the beautiful road. The year had been an inspiring one for Ellen and yet she had completely lost her impulse to creative thinking. Her happiness was so deep, so full, so soul-absorbing it had been impossible to do serious work. She had basked in the sun. She had strolled in the parks and listened to the chirp of birds and watched with lazy joy the foolishness of young lovers. Her work was a farce.

"What a wonderful year it has been, dear man!" she exclaimed after a long silence.

"Wonderful."

"Have you any regrets?"

"Only that the year had so few days in it!"

"That can be remedied — we'll enlarge the calendar by adding another, shall we not?"

"And another."

"And another!"

"Keep your hand off this wheel while I'm driving!" she sternly commanded while the blood rushed in waves to her beautiful face.

"I didn't touch you!" he declared.

No, but you were going to if I hadn't stopped you."

"Let's take a cup of tea at Bear Mountain — we

stopped there a minute on that first drive — don't you remember?"

"And watched the droves of silly lovers pour across the road. All right, we'll stop."

She swung the little roadster into line with the cars in the reservation for motor vehicles and they walked up to the restaurant.

The usual Saturday crowd thronged the place. Most of the seats were taken, but they found a table at last beside the windows overlooking the river. And as luck would have it they could talk without fear of being overheard. A family party had annexed the tables nearby and their noisy chatter gave the solitude they wished. "Aren't you happy, my love-man?" she asked tenderly.

"As a grinning idiot," he laughed.

"Don't you begin to see now that marriage is merely the established legal bond between the owner and the bought, the keeper and the kept?"

"Whatever you say goes," he parried.

"But don't you see it and feel it as I do now?"

"I suppose I must. If I got any more joy out of the old-fashioned marriage I would be reduced to a state of idiocy."

He didn't try to argue. She was doing it for both and he saw it clearly. Her mind was busy sum-

ing up the year's joys and the spell could not be broken. Her tones were a half-dreaming, half-waking ecstacy.

"I hated submission, and now that I know I'm free, I love to submit to your will, don't I?"

He nodded approval.

"I said I'd be your comrade and companion or nothing. I've proven that it's possible, haven't I?"

"You have."

"The moment I had been your slave this would not have been possible, now would it?"

"Certainly not!"

"A womanhood free, strong, tender, fearless ——"

She paused and flushed scarlet. Her eyes were fixed in a speechless stare across the crowded room.

Manning turned quickly and saw Edwin Brown approaching their table, a broad smile on his handsome face.

His heart gave a thump and he felt it was going to stop. He knew that Brown had been really in love with Ellen. He had dreaded to face the day of his discovery of their relations. It might open ugly possibilities in more ways than one. If he should be vindictive, he could smash his career at a blow. If he turned out to be the scoundrel the world believed him, his determination to win her might be more grim than ever, and his

methods without a scruple. Perhaps Brown wouldn't leap at conclusions after all.

But Manning didn't like the curious smile that played about the corners of his expressive mouth as he came nearer. He liked still less the mask that followed the smile as he reached their table.

He rose to greet him and met the extended hand with casual politeness.

"Sit down, governor, and have a bite, won't you?" he said politely.

"Yes, do," Ellen urged.

"Thank you," he answered, promptly taking the proffered seat.

He held Ellen's gaze for an instant and she blushed.

"Well, children," he began gravely, "I've certainly caught you ——"

"Really!" Ellen exclaimed.

"Surest thing you know," he went on half-humorously, half-seriously. "I caught a glimpse of that little roadster twice before on this drive to Bear Mountain, caught a glimpse of the woman in the case, but couldn't make out the man — well, well, well!"

He folded his arms and surveyed the pair.

Manning flushed and moved uneasily.

Ellen laughed outright.

"I suppose you'll report us to the grand jury?" she asked in mock fear.

"It's probably my duty as a law-abiding citizen — but I hate duties."

He paused and smiled curiously at Ellen.

Manning's blood began to boil.

"So this is why I haven't had a ghost of a chance the past year, eh?"

"Yes."

"Couldn't even get a telephone message through to you — well, well; what's the use of a man having money if it don't get what he wants!"

"It will be distressing if woman ever emerges from the age of barter and sale, won't it?" Ellen broke in.

He ignored the interruption.

"You know, you're the first woman who ever threw me flat, without even a passing 'excuse me' as you walked over my prostrate form."

"And I'm not to be forgiven?"

"On the other hand, my admiration has increased. I'll get over the hurt. Men of my egotistical make-up always recover — but tell me something ——"

He stopped short and searched Ellen's eyes.

"Yes?"

"You look radiant; more beautiful than ever."

Manning stirred uneasily.

"Keep still, young man," he growled. "You're more beautiful than ever," he went on, "but you've written very little the past year — why?"

"I've been too happy, I suppose," was the frank confession.

"That's it, beyond a doubt," he mused. "And the funny thing is that it's the contradiction of all your pet theories of self-development!"

"Nonsense!" she protested.

"It certainly is," he affirmed. "By every article of your creed your mind should be blossoming as your radiant body. You have attained woman's supreme dream — the love of the man you love — and instead of writing a great book, you've stopped work!"

"I've a right to my year of jubilee!"

"Granted, but look at this youngster by your side."

Manning's heart gave another thump, but he faced his superior boldly.

"And what of him?" Ellen asked in low tones.

"Well," he continued musingly, "my managing editor has been telling me for some time that he's doing the best work of his life. He has recommended him for city editor. A rank amateur for such a job, but I've a notion to take a chance. Can't help a friendly interest in two cheerful idiots who have set out on so perilous a journey ——"

He paused and laid his hand on Manning's arm.

"You can go on Monday morning, son; your salary's ten thousand a year!"

He rose and extended his hand to Ellen.

"Good-bye and good luck!"

Manning pushed his chair aside, sprang to his feet and grasped Brown's hand.

"I can't tell you how much I appreciate it, sir; I can't thank you!"

"You don't need to. You've earned your promotion. You're worth every dollar of your salary to my paper, or you wouldn't get it."

With a wave of his long arm and a smile he was gone.

"By Jove, that's great!" Manning whispered; "isn't it?"

"Wonderful," she responded abstractedly.

"I was scared one minute and ready to choke him the next when he was devouring you with his eyes, but, by George, he got my goat! To think of his doing this on the spur of the minute."

He stopped and thought.

"And it was on the level. It was a square business proposition. He knows you too well to have any sinister purpose in the back of his head."

He looked at Ellen and caught the expression of brooding antagonism.

"For heaven's sake, what's the matter?" he asked nervously.

"Nothing."

It was past the ken of mere man to know that she had felt the first pang of jealousy as his rival in the world's work. He had passed her on the road to fame and fortune. His salary was nearly double the one she was receiving. Hers would probably remain at six thousand for the next ten years. There was hardly a limit to the possibilities of his advancement in the next decade.

She lay awake for hours that night in the cabin on the cliff brooding over the sinister suggestions which her foolish jealousy had roused.

CHAPTER XIII

THE QUARREL

ELLEN WEST had quickly recovered from her mood of jealous rivalry. She tried to make up for the ugly thought by unusual tenderness toward Manning.

"I'm glad! Of course I am," she repeated. "I want him to be the biggest force in New York's intellectual life — to climb to the very top, and I'll help him do it!"

In spite of her generous resolutions and stern adherence to them the hurt was there. Deep down she found it festering. It was unreasonable that a boy with only two years' experience in New York should leap suddenly ahead of her at a single bound. It was unfair. It was part of the old régime of the dual standard of morals and the dual standard of unequal pay for equal work. The revolution she was leading would also right this wrong.

And yet when she faced the truth she knew that her salary was as large as the position could pay. A magazine of revolutionary ideas could not command millions of readers. The moment it could do so, its work would be done. The man who could hold down the job of city

editor of a great morning daily was worth ten thousand a year to the enterprise. There was nothing unfair or unreasonable about it. It was simply a question of brains and the capacity for unlimited work.

She braced herself for the celebration of Manning's promotion, which Brown had planned at his country place on Long Island.

More than a hundred people had been invited to spend the week-end as his guests. It was the first social function which she had consented to attend since her union with Manning. It was, in fact, one of the few where it would have been possible for both to be present without question or embarrassment.

Brown's mother was eighty years old, a fine specimen of the old-school society leader. She worshipped her handsome bachelor son and while she nominally presided over his home, his word was the only law she wished to know. His list of guests she invited without question. She knew that he loved her too tenderly to wound her pride with an invitation which would cause unpleasant comment. Had he done so, she was a woman of too strong a character to have even winced at his mistake.

As a matter of fact the guests Brown had selected were beyond suspicion — artists, men of letters, editors and newspaper owners, their wives, daughters, sisters

and cousins. It was quite unnecessary to explain an invitation to Ellen West. She was the most noted woman editor in America.

One little personal attention to her comfort and happiness Brown gave with the utmost care that no one should discover his purpose. He sincerely admired the daring of the young feminist leader, though skeptical of the ultimate outcome of her experiment. Every male materialist and every conservative woman would naturally be a skeptic on such an issue. But Brown was fair. He would give her the benefit of the doubt. In the meantime, he would see to it that she was happy in this first visit to the magnificent estate which would have been her own had she accepted his offer.

He gave his personal attention to the assignment of the rooms to each guest.

"I'll attend to it myself, mother," he said lightly. "It will test the capacity of the house this time — more than a hundred, you know."

"Nonsense, Edwin," she replied. "We don't keep a house. We keep a hotel. It will be very strange if we can't make a hundred people comfortable in seventy-five rooms."

"Oh, I'll store them all snugly away, never fear."

He made out the list and assigned each guest to their

rooms with his own hand. The fine suite on the south-east corner with its windows overlooking the Sound both south and east he selected for Ellen West.

"We'll have to divide all the suites," he said to the housekeeper.

He gave the large corner room to Ellen and assigned the next room to Manning. He closed the communicating door, locked and bolted it. And just before the guests began to arrive he entered the suite, slipped the bolt, unlocked the door, removed the key and put it in his pocket.

"Bless their dear foolish hearts," he said; "it would be cruel to separate them on a festival day for her lover!"

Ellen was quick to catch the significance of their assignment.

She heard Manning whistling in the next room and tried the knob on the communicating door. She was absolutely sure it was not locked and yet when it opened at her touch and she walked into Manning's room she laughed immoderately.

Manning turned with a quick look of surprise and joined in the laugh.

"This is what I call 'all the comforts of home'!" she cried, "without any of its annoying cares!"

He glanced at the window overlooking the garden,

saw the men at work among the flowers and quickly drew the shades.

"Do you suppose the Big Boss did that on purpose?" Manning asked.

"Of course."

"Thoughtful of him, wasn't it?"

"Very."

"Almost too thoughtful, come to think of it."

"Why?" she inquired protestingly.

"You don't suppose he'll be discussing our affairs with his guests, do you?"

"Impossible."

"Pretty plain announcement that he understands the situation."

"You don't suppose, dear boy, that we could fool a man of his knowledge of the world?"

"I'm glad somebody knows it, aren't you?"

"No. It's nobody's business."

"Still, you can't live and die absolutely to yourself, now can you?"

She looked at him a minute with searching question.

"Been getting restless in our little world for the past years, my conquering man?"

He flushed and answered quickly:

"You know I haven't."

"I've sometimes wondered," she mused.

"You've kept your wondering very quiet," he observed.

"Well, you'll be the lion here to-night," she went on briskly. "I'll have to keep my distance, I suppose, and admire from afar."

"If you do," he said impulsively, "I'll walk right up and kiss you before the crowd."

Her eyes brightened.

"Would you?"

"Yes. And I'll do it, too, if you begin any funny business here with me to-night in this mob. I hate crowds anyhow."

"I'll be the soul of discretion, never fear," she answered banteringly.

In spite of the effort to appear at ease during the games of the afternoon they were both conscious of the dramatic situation which Brown's keen eyes enjoyed.

The instant Ellen appeared on the broad porch she was surrounded by a group of women admirers. Manning followed a half-hour later. She was annoyed at first by his delay. And yet the longer he stayed, the more embarrassing she felt that his appearance would be if they attempted to remain together in such a crowd.

She sighed with relief when Brown introduced him immediately to a lot of pretty girls. Her relief gave

way to anger as she threw an occasional glance in the direction of his group.

He had evidently been relieved by Brown's tact and appeared to be decidedly enjoying himself. She despised herself for such vulgar jealousy only to look again with increasing anger.

He was holding a regular levee. Every pretty girl on the place was pressing forward to greet the lion of the occasion. The thing that particularly annoyed her was that three or four angling match-making mothers were hanging over him after they had dangled the bait of their pretty daughters before his eyes. They were pressing him with invitations to call, for teas, dinners, receptions and theatre parties, of course.

She dropped the discussion which she was holding with two of the directors of the magazine and walked straight into the circle of girls and scheming mothers. Her face was flushed and her eyes sparkled. She had pressed her way through the crowd before she realized her foolish mistake. But it was impossible to retreat.

She extended her hand while she was stammering and making excuses to a fat mother whose plump offspring smiled enticingly.

"May I offer my congratulations also among the first, Mr. Manning?"

His jaw dropped and the perspiration started in

tiny beads on his forehead, while his face flushed scarlet.

The fat mother stared and the smile died on the dimpled daughter. There was an accent of authority in her tones that chilled general conversation.

He took her hand mechanically and stammered an incoherent reply. The fat mother nodded a friendly good-bye and the smiling daughter faded away.

"For the love of God," he groaned under his breath, "get me out of this."

"You're enjoying it," she replied in low tones.

"I'm in hell," he gasped. "They push and crowd and press on me. Lord, there comes Brown with another dozen; save me, for God's sake, save me!"

His distress was so genuine, his desire to escape so sincere, her heart smote her for making the scene. At least no one present understood its meaning. She was thankful for that.

She pressed his hand gently and whispered:

"Forgive me, dearest, I couldn't help it. I'll not be silly again."

She had quite regained her composure when Brown appeared with the second bevy of girls.

She searched his face for a trace of malice and found only the smiling mask of the host bent on giving the utmost of himself to his guests.

She nodded a friendly challenge. He caught her

subtle meaning, introduced the girls and followed her into the flower garden, where she found a seat in the shadow of a rose trellis.

"You're not jealous?" he laughed.

"Yes."

"You needn't be — there's not an ounce of brains in the whole crowd."

"But some remarkably pretty faces."

"I thought jealousy was forbidden by your creed?"

"It is."

"You have fallen from grace?"

"I have."

"You underestimate your powers, dear lady," he reassured her. "Your man is sweating blood."

"He'll survive."

"I really hated to torture him. But I had to do it."

"I understand."

"I tried to make you two silly people happy."

"You personally arranged that suite?"

"Certainly."

"No one else knows?"

"Stole the keys myself."

"It was very sweet of you."

"Cost me a pang or two, dear lady."

"You're bearing up bravely."

He looked at her seriously.

"What else could I do, but play the rôle of a Brownie godfather to two wilful children? I assure you that your happiness is a thing I deeply desire."

"Did you promote my man because you once made love to me?"

"Honestly, no."

"I had hoped it might be so."

"Why?"

"Just a little jealous of my sweetheart's big success, I think."

"Impossible. You don't do yourself justice."

"It's true. You forget that when a woman demands her position of equality with man she may become his rival."

"That is a fact, isn't it?" he mused.

"I'm ashamed of it, but it's true."

He stooped and picked a pebble from the walkway. His eyes were bent on the ground while he spoke.

"You are happy?"

"As happy as any woman can be."

He watched her narrowly out of the corners of his clear steel eyes.

"All right. I just want you to always remember that the best wish of my heart is for your real happiness even if I have to find it in giving you to my rival."

Ellen placed her hand on his.

"You're a good fellow, Edwin," she responded earnestly. "I'll not forget that little speech ——"

She paused at the sound of a footstep, lifted her eyes and saw Manning stare angrily at the scene.

Brown rose without embarrassment and waved to him.

"Take my seat, my boy, and have a quiet hour here removed from the mob. I was just having a heart-to-heart talk to your sweetheart about you."

"Thanks," Manning answered.

The tones in which his employer had spoken were so honest, so straightforward, so reassuring, he cast out instantly his supicions. But he had his own idea about Ellen's part in the incident.

He fixed her with a searching gaze.

"You took Brown out here deliberately to flirt with him?"

His jealousy made her unreasonably happy.

"Why shouldn't I, if I felt the impulse?"

"You're free, of course"

"And I expect to remain free."

"So do I."

She glared at him.

"Mind you don't go too far, sir!"

"How could I help them crowding around me?"

"I didn't say you could."

"You imply as much!"

"I didn't say you could help their crowding around you, but I must say you took the assault quite philosophically."

"What would you have me do?"

"You didn't have to make calf eyes at the poor young things."

"I didn't make calf eyes at 'em!"

"I saw you."

"It's not true and you know it."

"And you know that I didn't lure Brown out here to flirt with him."

"You have a perfect right to flirt as much as you please, I suppose."

"And you have a perfect right to make calf eyes at pretty girls if you feel the impulse."

"Why quarrel, then?"

"I'm not; you picked this quarrel."

"Well of all the cheek! I was sitting here in the most innocent little chat with my host ——"

"With one hand pressing his."

"You were watching us?"

"Yes."

"I'm glad you saw it ——"

"I'm glad you saw me making calf eyes at those girls ——"

"You admit it, then?"

"For the sake of hurting you, yes!"

She rose with a movement of anger and he seized her hand.

"Don't go, dear; I'm sorry, and I'm miserable."

She sat down again and smiled.

"Are you?"

"Utterly miserable."

"I'm glad."

"Let's not quarrel!"

"Shall we kiss and make up?" she asked archly.

He pressed her hand and bent toward her lips, but stopped short at the sight of Field. He was rapidly approaching the little bower evidently looking for them.

"Confound him!" Manning hissed. "There's another old sweetheart coming to try his luck again!"

"Don't be foolish, boy," she whispered, returning the pressure of his hand.

Field was under the trellis, bowing gracefully.

"Congratulations to you both, my children!" he heartily called from the doorway. "I'm glad to find you together."

"Won't you sit down?" Manning responded.

"No, no, keep your seat, boy. You're the king here to-day. You know that I was in love with Ellen. She couldn't see me with a spyglass. I'm glad you won.

You're a real man. You don't know how hard hit I was."

Ellen frowned.

"Honest injun; I've been away for a year, haven't I?"

"Yes; you went to Japan to write a book."

"My excuse, children. I ran away because I was crossed in love."

Manning and Ellen joined in a laugh.

"And all the sympathy I get is a sneer from the happy couple who are camping on the grave of my affections."

Field rattled on for half an hour keeping up the pretense of his crushed heart until Manning grew tired of it. Through his banter he felt the keen cold nose of the hunter searching for game. It made him furious to think that this polished materialist was perhaps the only man next to Brown who knew the truth of his relations to Ellen and that he was deliberately trying to take advantage of it now to air his stale wit.

He was growing angrier and more miserable by the minute. Ellen felt it instinctively and said finally:

"Do run along, Randy, I'm tired of your twaddle. I've got something important to say to my man."

"Well, I must say," Field muttered, "that in the art of gentle hinting you're a past mistress, Ellen. But I forgive you. Bye-bye, children. And listen, fair leader

of woman, keep your eye on the anglers at the ball to-night. They'll try to land him under your very nose!"

"Go away, Randy!" Ellen commanded.

"I've taken the hint; I go; see you both later."

"Let's go home!" Ellen exclaimed.

"I wish we could," he responded.

"Pack your grip; I'll follow in an hour."

He shook his head.

"It's impossible."

"The thing's given in my honor. Brown would never forgive such an insult."

"No."

"We've got to stick it out," he concluded gloomily.

"What?"

"Promise me one thing, then," she begged.

"Cut as much of that idiotic dancing as you can."

"I'll cut it all out."

"You can't."

"I suppose not. Confound it, why did I ever agree to come anyhow."

"And why did I?"

"I'll hurry back now and find Brown for some more grinning, and bowing and polite lying."

"Yes, go; we've been here too long."

He left her brooding in moody silence and they met but a moment in their suite before dinner.

She slipped her arms around his neck and gave way to the first tears she had shed since their union.

He soothed her in silence, stroking the brown hair tenderly.

"I'm miserable, dear love-man!" she sighed.

"So am I, my love-woman! We'll cut this sort of thing out of our life, won't we?"

"We will."

The ball was the climax of her misery. There was no such thing as escape for Manning. The pretty girls overwhelmed him and their mothers added tenfold to his troubles.

Ellen watched the rush to ensnare him with impotent rage. Twice she left the ballroom in sheer disgust and went to her own room determined to go to bed and try to sleep. Each time she returned to the scene of her humiliation, drawn by an irresistible spell.

The attack on Manning was continuous. They fired in platoons and single-handed. They outnumbered him and surrounded him if he dared try to escape. It was past twelve o'clock and he had ceased to struggle. He was the most accomplished and graceful dancer in the room. Ellen was surprised and hurt to learn it. She didn't dance. She didn't care to waste her time. She

envied the giggling, pretty ones to-night. They smiled unutterable things into the face of her man with an audacity that was disgusting. How could women be so shameless in their bid for a man!

As they swept by her in the whirl of a waltz she caught Manning answering his partner with a smile of more gaiety than conventional politeness required. She was an unusually beautiful girl of twenty-one—willowy, graceful, intelligent — with the same eyes and hair as her own.

Unable to endure the scene another moment she left the place abruptly, went to her room, undressed and went to bed.

Before throwing the switch of the electric light she deliberately bolted the door communicating with Manning's room. An hour later she lay with wide-staring eyes reviewing the maze of her tangled life.

She heard his gentle rap on the door and he softly tried the knob. Half an hour later he knocked again. She didn't wish to see him. Through the long hours of the night she tossed wide-awake and miserable.

CHAPTER XIV

THE AFTERMATH

THE one tantalizing thing that had kept Ellen awake destroyed completely her peace of mind and killed for the moment even the desire for her lover was the fear of future quarrels.

She got the first vivid pictures of what freedom might mean for a man. Manning had struggled fairly well against the flood of sex allurement into which designing women had sought to overwhelm him to-night. He would probably struggle again. His sense of humor was keen. His sense of loyalty was even keener.

But could any man withstand the continuous challenge with which girls who wished to win could pound him?

The trouble was women were yet in the zoölogical period of development. They couldn't and they wouldn't keep their eyes off her man. Being free he was fair game.

It was equally true that men would not keep their eyes off her. She had resented Manning's accusation of an attempt to flirt with Brown, yet in her heart she knew that Brown had been drawn to her by a resistless

desire to test the depth and sincerity of her love for Manning. Beneath the friendly and always polite solicitude of the host she felt the nose of the hunter. It irritated yet flattered her vanity. It irritated her to think that men should hold her so shallow and changeable. It flattered her to feel that in spite of her union with Manning, a man of Brown's position, power and strength of character found it worth while to follow her. It went without saying that Field would never give up the chase so long as she held him at bay.

With a little pang she recalled at daylight her refusals to admit Manning to her room. She wondered vaguely what he would say and just how he would take it.

She fell asleep at last from sheer exhaustion and slept until noon. She sprang from bed, glanced at the clock and listened for a sound from Manning. Not a movement could be heard. A flood of bitter regret at her rebuff overwhelmed her. She would make up for it. Married people quarrelled and made up. They were married in the truest and deepest sense. They were bound by love alone. What a fool she had been to allow anger and jealousy to make them both miserable.

She tiptoed to his door, softly slipped the bolt and turned the knob. The door was fast! He had thrown the bolt on his side

She laughed at first and tapped gently.

"Served me right!" she muttered.

She knocked again and listened. Still not a sound. She knocked more distinctly.

"I'm sorry, love-man!" she called plaintively.

For ten minutes she stood and listened. He had, of course, risen early and gone to his breakfast.

A sickening fear began to grow in her heart. She had treated him outrageously. She had no right to expect him to forget it instantly. Yet why shouldn't she bolt her door against a husband if she liked? Old-fashioned marriage forbade such rights to a wife. But she was not an old-fashioned wife and never intended to be one. He was trying to bully her. Well, she would show him that two people could play that game!

She dressed hastily and hurried down to breakfast. The dining-room was crowded with guests equally late. Manning was nowhere to be seen.

She ate her breakfast in silence. She longed to see Lucy Sheldon. She wondered vaguely if her transfer to Holt's Chicago paper had anything to do with her relations to Manning. The idea was impossible. Lucy Sheldon was too frank to have run away to avoid such an issue. And yet if Manning had told his aunt the truth, that he had yielded to her imperious demand for a marriage of her own making, she might have accepted

the Chicago opening with its larger salary to avoid the pain of a discussion.

The thought angered and worried her this morning beyond measure. It had never occurred to her before. The more she thought of it, the more certain became the conviction that her friend knew and left New York to avoid her. She would find Manning at once and ask him.

A sense of bitter loneliness choked her. She couldn't finish her breakfast. She stopped abruptly, left the table, and began her search over the spacious and beautiful grounds. She walked through the garden in vain. Here and there a young couple sat spooning, but nowhere the familiar tall figure.

These young fools spooning at the noon hour angered her still more. She left the garden in disgust, strolled along the water's edge and scanned the boats. A half dozen couples were rowing close in shore.

He was not among them. She sat down in the little boat-house on the pier utterly depressed. He was avoiding her, of course. He was as sensitive as he was stubborn. She made up her mind finally that he could go to the devil. He could look for her from now on.

She had just reached this state of perfect unhappiness when Brown suddenly stood before her, tipped his hat and said:

"Mr. Manning received a telephone call from the office this morning that took him to town on the eight o'clock train ——"

He paused and watched the blood slowly mount to her cheeks.

"I'm afraid you quarrelled," he added gravely.

"You're a keen observer.

"Well, I couldn't help wondering how any man could leave you at such an unearthly hour."

"I suppose he had to go."

"He did not."

"You saw him this morning?"

"No, the butler told me.'

A silence followed.

"You did quarrel?" he persisted.

"Yes."

"About me?"

Ellen laughed.

"Vanity of vanities — all is vanity, saith the preacher!"

"No?"

"No."

"About what, then?"

"About these pretty girls who did their best to steal my man away from me last night. Did you bring them here for that purpose?"

It was Brown's turn to laugh and he did it heartily.

"That would have been a neat revenge on you, wouldn't it?"

"Very."

"I assure you the thought never entered the back of my head."

"I never saw so many pretty girls in one spot in my life."

"Really?"

"And I never saw them so unanimously bent on one thing before."

She stopped and deliberately brushed a tear from her cheek.

"You're an interesting study," he observed drily.

"I'm anything but interesting to myself just now. Do you wish to be very nice to me in my misery?"

"Always."

"Will you send me home in one of your cars?"

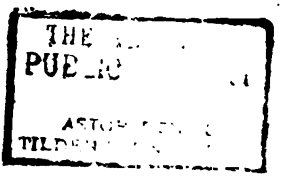
"Certainly. May I go with you?"

"I prefer to be alone."

"All right," he agreed lightly.

The day was one of rare beauty in late September — a perfect sky of deepest azure flecked with white clouds. The sun shone in dazzling splendor, lighting the purple-tipped leaves of the trees with tints of unusual depth.

"YOU'RE AN INTERESTING STUDY."


THE
PUBLIC
ASTOR
TILDEN

The beauty of the drive only made the ache in her heart the more hopeless.

"It was cruel and cowardly," she muttered; "cruel and cowardly!"

She knew that she was to blame and that made it the harder to bear. She would tell him what she thought of him now in words he would not forget — and then make up and love him to death!

It was three o'clock before she reached home. She called his apartment. He was not there. She called his club. He was not there. She didn't believe he was at the office at this hour, but she called it.

"Yes, Mr. Manning is here, but he cannot be disturbed."

"Connect me!"

"Excuse me, please ——"

The connection was broken! She rang up the managing editor. He was not in. She tried three times to get Manning and quit in rage.

She made up her mind once for all that she would die sooner than call him again. If there were any more telephone calls he could ring her up!

She waited three days in vain. It was incredible that he could be so sullen and vindictive. She reviewed the miserable dinner party in minute detail. She hated the memory of it — the eager ravenous eyes of those match-

making mothers fastened on her lover! She resented the fact without the ability to realize their point of view.

"Of course, the poor fools couldn't know he was mine!" she exclaimed finally.

And then her keen ears caught the expression "mine" and she turned her wrath on herself for the lapse into the old jargon of the slave-marriage régime.

"He's not *mine* and I'm not *his* after all," she admitted. "He can do as he pleases and I can do as I please. He pleases to sulk. Let him sulk. He's free — so am I. And I thank God I am. I wouldn't be chained to such a brute; at least, I've escaped that tragedy!"

She confronted herself with the philosophic reflection that their free alliance was being tried under conditions most unfavorable. To announce it to the world would be the open avowal of a crime under the present slave laws of marriage. In the new moral world of freedom and individualism such announcements would be made, of course. And this would take the place of the present system of registration.

This announcement would make such a scene as the one witnessed at the dinner party impossible. But would it? The more she thought of the ravenous hunger of those matchmaking mothers the graver became the doubt. The first sense of misgiving as to the perfection of her new ideal crept into her consciousness and made

her ill. Would the matchmakers stop because of a mere "announcement" which has no legal meaning? The announcement of a free alliance meant that each party to the agreement would remain at all times free to quit — the moment the arrangement ceased to be mutually satisfactory. A pretty girl and designing mother might make the most ideal arrangement unsatisfactory with a little time to manage it. They would, too, unless those mothers and pretty girls could be killed off or made over again.

The more she thought of it the deeper became the conviction that one of these vampires would get Manning.

She wondered what he was doing to-night. It was the fourth day since their return from Long Island and not a word had been received from him. She had sworn never to call him again. She had been too ill to work to-day and had gone to bed at noon.

If she could only get him on the telephone and say that she was ill he would come, of course. She shrank from the baby act. But the temptation was too strong once the idea took possession of her.

She would ring his apartment. He must be there at this hour unless he had gone out for a late dinner. His work at the office was finished at eleven-thirty. It was now twelve. A call at this late hour would be an abject

confession on her part. What of it? Her misery was abject. Her repentance should be equally so.

She seized the telephone eagerly.

She heard him take the receiver from the hook at last! Her heart beat with pain.

"Well, what is it?" he asked in quick business-like tones. He evidently thought the office had called. He hadn't answered her after all.

Her hand trembled so violently as she tried to hang up she fumbled and missed it.

"Well, well, what is it?" he repeated wearily.

There was a note of suffering in his tones that caught her. She couldn't endure it.

"Haven't you punished me enough now, dear love-man?" she said softly:

"Oh — it's you!"

"Please come quickly. I've been ill all day. I can't sleep. Will you come?"

He hesitated and she could feel the iron grip of his hand on the telephone as he answered:

"Yes; right away."

She met him at the door and sprang into his arms with a cry of anguish.

"Oh, how could you be so cruel!"

He smoothed the mass of waving hair with tender touch.

"Have you missed me?"

She pressed him close.

"You have a heart of stone," she groaned.

"But you shut me out of your life at a moment when I was tired and ill with worry. This is a free alliance by your stern decree. You had the right to put me out, but it hurt."

She was too honest to whine and say she hadn't meant to hurt him. Only she hadn't quite figured the possibilities of her act. She wouldn't lie out of it.

"Forgive me; I'm sorry," she murmured.

She was too honest to swear it wouldn't happen again. He felt the strength of her remarkable character as never before. He admired her for it in a way and yet it chilled the ardor of their reconciliation. It left a bitter taste in their kisses.

"You won't be sullen again, will you, dear?"

"I'll try not to."

"We'll begin all over again now!" she cried. "I'll love you harder than ever!"

She paused, drew his head down and whispered:

"And I'll never have another fit of idiotic jealousy."

"Never?"

"Never — I'm cured."

She kissed him again with clinging tenderness.

CHAPTER XV

THE NEW TYRANNY

ELLEN WEST discovered to her sorrow that freedom had its drawbacks. The first quarrel was a serious one. It had been settled by a complete surrender on her part. The settlement was far from satisfactory. The bitter taste of defeat remained.

The trouble was this idea of an open shop.

The conception of life was fundamental to the maintenance of the new creed. Manning must be free. She must be free. She had reasoned this out beyond argument. Freedom implied the right of any woman to bid for his favor. It implied the right of any man to bid for hers.

She tried for six months the plan of isolation. She dreaded another quarrel. Manning was the type of man who took quarrels seriously. He swore that all was forgiven and forgotten. She knew it was untrue. Again and again she caught him in absent-minded brooding. She knew the poison which their first quarrel had planted in his heart was still doing its deadly work.

She scrupulously avoided all social gatherings. If they should be together there might be a repetition of the misery of Brown's week-end party. If she should go alone, he would be uneasy about the men who would show her attentions. That she should permit him to go alone was out of the question.

The tension of their perpetual suspicions was serious enough without the added strain of social frivolities. A new difficulty arose with the plan of isolation. They began to get on each other's nerves. He chafed at the lack of the sane companionship of friends and acquaintances. She could see the brooding hunger in his eyes. He was thinking of his infernal old-fashioned ideal of a home fireside, children, and friends!

He began to spend more time at his clubs. He was a member of three now.

He lied about his clubs at first. A mild quarrel ensued — mild in its outburst of emotion, but deadly in its effect on their inner relations. He pretended to be tied down at his desk. She found one night that he was not at the office, called each of his clubs and located him. Next day, with deliberate malice, she asked him about his work the night before and led him into a description of its details.

She suddenly turned on him.

"You're lying to me!"

Surprised for a moment he quickly recovered and shocked her with his answer. She expected him to fence and hedge and lie again. Instead he told her the brutal truth in a way that cut to the quick.

"Of course I lied. It seemed the easiest way. We've been getting on each other's nerves lately. We're seeing too much of one another."

"And yet you wish to chain me for life with a marriage ceremony!"

He twisted his mouth with a savage force, drew his heavy eyebrows low and remained silent.

"You did; didn't you?"

"Did what?" he asked absently.

"Wished to chain me for life!"

His mouth slowly relaxed and a dreamy look overspread his mobile face.

"Yes, I did, but the links of the chain I was dreaming about were made of baby fingers."

She gave no answer. She refused to lower herself to the level of the old masculine subterfuge. Maternity was for the ignorant. Reproduction was the blindest, stupidest act of all nature. A fish could lay a million eggs in one season. She thanked God that she had passed the fish stage of self-development.

With an effort of supreme will she controlled her anger and ended the quarrel.

"Come, man, no more quarrels," she said lightly. "Take me to a matinée. I'm hungry for a good play."

For a month she skillfully avoided too many meetings, and saw with keen interest his revived loyalty. Again she was confirmed in her creed. It was the perpetual daily friction of personal contact that made marriage a martyrdom. She had been trying unconsciously to renew the same conditions.

There was still much lacking in the scheme of isolation. He must have human companionship. He must feel the touch of the world. The herd instinct in man she knew to be the oldest and deepest of all forces underlying character. She was trying to create a new world forgetting this force. It couldn't be done.

The compromise must be found. Anxious hours she spent in working out its details. The only practical thing was a certain amount of publicity which must be given to the fact of their union by the new ceremony of announcement.

Again she was confronted with the old régime and its hateful celebration of the union of man and woman! And yet there seemed no other way out of an intolerable situation. It was impossible for a man and woman to completely isolate themselves from human society and find satisfaction merely in the union of their individual lives.

The remedy lay in a careful selection of free men and women as the chosen circle in which they would move. She determined to select these people and announce to each of them the fact of their union. Within this charmed circle of equals they would have a world all their own within a world of slaves.

She proposed the scheme for his approval.

"Do as you like, dear," he replied carelessly. "It will be all right with me."

"Don't you think it will be the solution of our little troubles?" she asked with some irritation.

"Hadn't thought of it — worth trying — go to it."

His attitude of absorbed indifference roused her anger. Absorbed in himself and his career, and indifferent to hers or her happiness! But why fret and fume! If it were true, fretting and fuming would only aggravate, not cure the trouble.

She selected carefully a hundred men and women of intelligence and sympathy enrolled in the feminist movement. They belonged to the rational wing. Each one of them held equally positive views on the subject of marriage and they would view with approval or enthusiasm the experiment which she had inaugurated in the new code of social ethics.

She began in her Fifth Avenue apartment a series of afternoon teas and Sunday evening receptions. They

were an instantaneous success. For the first time since her union with the man of her choice she felt thoroughly at ease in a social gathering. There was just the touch of adventure in the situation which gave it zest and lifted the affair above the banality of the ordinary social function.

She was the high priestess of a new religion and felt the strength of the faith of sympathetic followers.

Manning, of course, attended the functions. Otherwise they could have had no meaning, beyond the mere killing of time in pleasant social conversation. To Ellen's annoyance she found that he was rapidly becoming the chief source of interest to the women. With increasing emphasis her followers were dilating on the beauty of freedom — with the accent on the freedom.

It was becoming more and more painfully evident that some of her less fortunate sisters who were possessed of a beauty which equalled hers, and yet struggled to make both ends meet on an income of twenty dollars a week, were attending with unfailing regularity. It was equally apparent that they had but the slightest interest in their hostess. They sought Manning with brazen effrontery and literally sat at his feet. There was no such thing as shaking them off.

Ellen watched them with amused contempt for a few

weeks and then with growing anger. She could read in their cat-like eyes the cunning appraisal of his income. A man with an income of ten thousand a year they could not meet every day in New York. She watched their subtle flatteries and pandering to his masculine vanities.

Vera Daly, a young illustrator on the staff of her own magazine, was the most unscrupulous of the group of his satellites. She dressed with a voluptuous suggestiveness that bordered on vulgarity and affected the airs of high brow art in a way that provoked Ellen beyond endurance.

It reached a climax on a Thursday afternoon when she had absorbed Manning for more than an hour without giving even one of her rivals a chance to slip in a word edgewise.

Ellen watched the scene until she could endure it no longer. She walked straight to them and touched Miss Daly on the shoulder.

"May I see you a moment?"

The girl turned with a look of annoyed surprise and rose slowly.

"Won't you excuse me, Mr. Manning," she beamed, "while I answer Miss West's call — don't run away. I've a lot more to tell you."

Ellen led the way to the balcony, entered her bedroom,

and held the door open until the young artist had entered.

She closed the door quickly and faced the offender. Her face was flushed, her eyes sparkling with rage.

"Miss Daly, you attempt to make love to my mate every time you come to my apartment."

The arched brows of the artist were lifted in a movement of contempt.

"We live in a new, free world, Miss West," she drawled. "Mr. Manning is the most intellectual, the most charming man I have ever met. I was irresistibly drawn to him from the moment we were introduced."

"The attraction has not been mutual."

"Then why worry?"

"You are thrusting your attentions on him."

The fine shoulders were slightly shrugged.

"I haven't noticed any resentment on his part."

"No, as my guest he must treat you politely."

"He has, I assure you!" she laughed.

"I trust it will not be necessary for me to tell you in so many words that your presence is not desired here again."

"Certainly not. I have Mr. Manning's telephone."

"He gave it to you?" she asked in rage.

"I asked him for it and he couldn't refuse. I shall see him when I please, if he wishes it as much as I do.

I like your cheek in taking me to task in this insulting manner. You are free to seek a new lover. He is free to respond to my love if I can win him."

"You confess that you are in love with him?"

"He interests me. It's a free world, you know. Do you wish me to leave immediately?"

"Yes."

"Very good. I shall announce that I have been asked to leave the room because I made eyes at your property!"

Ellen gripped her arm.

"Stay, please. You are my guest. I apologize most humbly."

"Don't mention it," she sneered, opening the door and hurrying downstairs.

Ellen watched her return to Manning's side with deliberate malice and resume her conversation.

She made her decision instantly. These functions would not be repeated. They were enormously popular with the women. It was only too plain that the primitive instincts of the average woman could not be eradicated in a day.

The young she-devil with whom she had just fought would certainly stop at nothing to carry her point. She thought of the possibilities of her character with a shudder.

Manning heard the announcement of her decision with quiet joy.

"I'm glad you've had enough," he said simply.

"You don't mind the loss of so many charming admirers?" she asked unsteadily.

"I devoutly thank God to be rid of them!"

"Sure you don't regret Miss Vera Daly?"

"Quite sure."

"You were not even interested?"

"Interested in studying her as a type of the cheap adventuress who has adopted your creed in search of new emotions."

A feeling of immense relief swept her.

"You're a very sensible, honest-to-God old sweetheart!" she cried, and gave him a kiss.

CHAPTER XVI

SELF-DEVELOPMENT

IN the year which followed, Manning dropped into the habit of spending more and more time at his clubs. He developed two groups of friends with whom he played poker. He told Ellen about his games, his winnings and losses. She tried to take an interest in it for his sake. But as his absences increased and his attentions grew more conventional, a dumb misery began to smother her brain and render work impossible.

She had made no real progress in her work since her love-affair began. He had forged rapidly ahead and, then, when the nagging, quarrelling and unhappiness began, he too had stood still. He had learned to play a better game of poker, but his ambitions had waned.

She realized this with a sense of keen pain and made another desperate effort to regain their ideal. They had both intended to write plays. She had studied dramatic construction and had done a one-act piece which had been produced by a stage society of advanced thinkers.

She proposed to him a collaboration in a four-act drama of the marriage problem.

He jumped at the idea and they began the next day. He insisted on a thorough re-study of the fundamental tenets of feminism. She supplied the books with eager anticipation of his conversion to her faiths.

As he finished the reading of each revolutionary volume they discussed it together. His antagonism was invincible. He could find a dozen objections to every proposition her favorite authors propounded.

"Why do you try to antagonize every idea suggested?" she asked, finally worn out with his continuous pounding.

"It's the only way to get the truth. It must be tested out. I try to see things the way these women view it. I see it the man's way. I am a man, you know."

"Try it my way," she pleaded. "Can't you use your imagination? Can't you put yourself in my place?"

"Why should I?" he protested. "If I am to contribute anything to the thought of the world it must be as a man — not as a woman."

In an endless wrangle over the question of the differences of the sexes the collaboration drifted gradually into personal quarrels which rendered work impossible.

He gave up in a temper at last, bolted the house and sulked for a week, refusing to call or be called.

She got him in a fit of depression, he answered the telephone and hurried to her apartment.

She held his hand in silence for a long time when the door had closed.

"Tell me, dear, what is the matter with us?"

"I don't know," he replied wearily.

"Is it all my fault?"

"I don't think so."

"Tell me honestly why you're so unhappy and why I catch it and we quarrel?"

"You want to know the God's truth?"

"Desperately — tell me."

"Too much self-development!"

She flushed angrily.

"On your part or mine?"

"Both, I suppose," he admitted.

"Mine principally?"

"Yes."

"All right," she urged, "go on!"

He twisted the muscles of his mouth and gazed out of the window.

"You see, it's like this. The chief aim in your life is self-development. You have no time to devote to the development of your mate. A man is a vain brute. He needs to be petted and flattered. In his weak soul he wants a woman to make a fuss over him, to tell him he's great, to inspire him to achievements."

"In other words," Ellen interrupted sneeringly, "he

wishes to be worshipped while pretending to worship his mate!"

"By George! I hadn't thought of it exactly that way, but I believe you're half right. You see, while we are both bent on self-development we can't be of much help to one another. We are sensitive. We're forever and eternally dissecting ourselves. We live and move in an atmosphere of impatience and spiritual turmoil."

She smiled eagerly.

"Let's reform!"

"I will if you will."

"It's a go."

They shook hands and settled to a hard evening's work on the construction of the first tentative plot of the play.

They had scarcely begun when a faint knock was heard.

"Who on earth?" she murmured in astonishment.

"The fool next door," Manning growled.

"Impossible. Field's off to Japan again."

Again the timid knock. It came fainter this time.

"You'd better go," he urged. "Dora will let them in."

She rose in time to stop the maid. She opened the door and gasped in astonishment.

A little miniature of herself stood trembling with fear.

"Is this my Aunt Ellen?" she faltered.

Ellen laughed.

"It must be, dear, if you say so. You make me think I've died and come to life again. You dear, adorable little thing; come in."

"Thank you," she sighed.

She carried a hand bag which appeared to be very light. She opened it with nervous, trembling fingers and drew out a crumpled letter.

Ellen edged her into the dining-room, shielding her from the range of Manning's vision.

The girl handed her the letter and Ellen read it hurriedly. It was from her invalid sister in Texas, who had gone to the Far West for her health five years ago. The handwriting was clear, but bore the mark of physical weakness.

DEAR ELLEN:

This is my little girl Rose. I'm not getting well as rapidly as I hoped. I can't see my baby grow into womanhood in this God-forsaken desert without a fight. Sam is making a bare living. I've read your wonderful book about woman. Won't you get work for my Rose and give her a chance in life? She's a dear, good girl and has learned to do first-class work on a typewriter. I send her to you in perfect faith that you love me and will help her.

Affectionately, your sister,

ROSE O'NEIL.

Ellen looked at her tenderly.

"Your name is Rose, too?"

"Yes'm," she answered lightly, and then gulped down the cry of loneliness at the thought of her mother.

Ellen watched her keenly.

"I hated to leave her," she faltered. "I just wouldn't come until she made me. But my brother's ten years old now and he can help her some. I nearly cried my eyes out on the train. I was so lonesome ——"

She choked and was silent.

Ellen slipped her arm around her tenderly.

"Well, you won't be lonesome again, my sweet little Rose. You're going to live with me."

"Live — with — you?"

She couldn't believe her ears. Her mother had merely told her that her famous aunt would help her to get work and make something of herself. She had loved this tall, distinguished aunt from the first sight and her happiness was complete at the joyous announcement that they could live together.

Rose drew Ellen's head down and kissed her while the tears rolled down her cheeks. The older woman's arms stole around the girl.

"My sweet little Rose," she repeated softly, "you'll bring me luck. I've been lonely, too, of late."

"I'll do my best to help you," Rose responded eagerly.

"Come into the library now and meet my friend, who is helping me write a play."

"A man?"

"How did you guess?" Ellen laughed.

"Saw a hat."

"Yes, a man."

"May I fix my hair a little?"

"Certainly," Ellen smiled indulgently, "you look so much like me, you must look your best always."

"My mother always said so," she whispered excitedly.

Ellen led her into the bedroom adjoining hers and threw on the light.

"This is your room, dear."

"Oh, isn't it beautiful — isn't it wonderful!" she cried in rapture. "I'm so happy I'm afraid I'll die."

Ellen smiled.

"Brush yourself up and come right down."

"In a jiffy!"

Ellen left her prinking at the mirror in joyous haste and reported to Manning the extraordinary arrival.

"And you are going to keep her here with you?"

"Yes. I fell in love with the silly thing the minute I saw her."

"Don't you think it will be awkward?"

"Not at all. That there is anything between us more than the friendship of fellow writers, she will not suspect for a moment."

"I think it unwise," he protested.

"Nonsense."

"How old is she?"

"She must be twenty."

"A very serious age; you'll get into trouble."

"She looks but sixteen and isn't older in knowledge of the world. I can tell from the look in her frank young eyes."

"Better send her to school."

"I'll teach her myself."

"And make a new woman of her?" he asked with a touch of malice.

"Yes!"

"I've a premonition of trouble."

"Forget it, boy," she answered gaily. "I've recovered my spirits with the acceptance of this burden. There may be something in the old idea of self-sacrifice after all. Anyhow, it won't be all self-sacrifice. She'll do my typewriting."

"She's a stenographer?" he asked in alarm.

"Only a typist."

"Oh, well, that may not be so bad."

"What's the matter with stenographers?"

"Nothing."

"Then why the fire alarm in your voice at the thought?"

"I just can't stand a girl stenographer; that's all. You'll find that the kid's a serious mistake."

He stopped in amazement at the vision before him. Rose had softly descended the stairs and entered the room with scarcely an echo of her light footfall on the thick carpet. Her face was flushed with excitement and the slender girlish figure was trembling in embarrassment.

He wondered if she could have heard his last unkind remark. She was smiling so sweetly it was impossible. He saw at once that she was so self-conscious from the excitement of the meeting that she had heard nothing.

"This is my friend, Mr. Manning, Miss Rose O'Neil," Ellen said.

Manning sprang to his feet instinctively and took the soft little extended hand.

He was dumbfounded at the startling resemblance between them.

"I never saw anything like it in my life!" he exclaimed.

"Like — like what?" Rose stammered.

"Why, the resemblance between you two," he hastened to explain, looking first at one and then the other.

"She's your miniature?" he added with a nod toward Ellen.

"The most startling resemblance," she agreed. "I suppose that's why I fell in love with her at sight," she added banteringly.

"Shouldn't be surprised," he agreed maliciously.

"My mother loved my auntie so, she was always talking about her. I reckon that's why I look like her."

She glanced at Ellen and blushed joyously at the idea of the resemblance.

"Her eyes are exactly the shade of yours," Manning observed; "her hair the same, complexion the same."

"A little freckled," Rose complained.

"They'll fade here, my child," he reassured her, continuing the inventory, "and the funny thing is she walks just like you and talks like you."

He paused and wrinkled his brow thoughtfully.

"I wonder now," he added.

"Wonder what?" Rose asked.

"Nothing worth knowing, dear," her aunt answered with a look of reproach at Manning.

"I was just wondering what your first ambition in life is?"

"Why, to work hard, make some money and help my mother."

"And then?"

"Why — then — I'll just get married, of course!"

Manning laughed immoderately and Rose blushed furiously.

"What's the matter with that?" Rose asked simply.

"Nothing at all, my dear," Ellen hastened to assure her. "Mr. Manning was trying to tease you."

For two hours Manning persisted in question after question, which developed the girl's old-fashioned ideals to Ellen's annoyance.

She interrupted him at last with an emphatic dismissal for the evening.

"You can toddle home now, Mr. Man," she said. "I want to talk awhile to my niece. I can't get in a word with you here."

He rose with a laugh, and at the door Ellen spoke in low tones.

"You've been very hateful to-night."

"I didn't mean it, I assure you. I was only showing you the size of the job you've cut out for yourself in her education."

"I'll attend to that without help."

"Shall I cease to call?"

"Please — don't quarrel, dear man. We began all over again to-night."

"To-morrow, then, we work in earnest?"

"Yes; beginning at nine."

"With a friendly wave of his long arm he said: "Good-night!"

And all the way home he chuckled over the funny contradiction in the miniature edition of Ellen and the mind inside the miniature.

Ellen talked for another hour to her worshipful little niece and kissed her good-night without the slightest premonition of the tragic train of events which her coming had set in motion.

CHAPTER XVII

ROSE O'NEIL

ELLEN awoke the following morning with a sense of relief. Rose's prattle had refreshed her soul. The girl's happiness was so real, her worship so sweet and soothing to her vanity, it was impossible to be with the child and not catch the contagious happiness that bubbled from her heart.

To her vivid young mind her aunt was the perfection of glorified womanhood. Her mother's praises had, of course, prepared her for this opinion, yet the impression Ellen had made far surpassed in reality all her mother had suggested.

This attitude of worship would make her education a joy. Ellen determined to begin it at once before the roar of New York's colossal life could confuse her. She would begin, of course, by finding out her attitude toward the cause of woman.

"We'll devote the first hour every morning, dear," Ellen announced at breakfast, "to laying out your studies for the day."

Rose's eyes sparkled.

"Oh, that's so sweet of you to give the first fresh

hour of the day to poor little me. I'm so proud, I'll hardly speak to myself after this."

Ellen shot her a look of sharp inquiry. Could she be posing with such a speech? Impossible! The look out of her honest young eyes was too sincere. Her resemblance to herself was so striking, it was unthinkable to accuse her of posing. The thought was dismissed. She was honest, in earnest, utterly frank, utterly sincere. It was worth one's time to teach her.

"You've read my book on 'The Modern Woman Movement,' dear?" Ellen asked when they reached the library.

Rose blushed.

"I'm sorry I haven't, auntie. But mama did and she says it's the greatest book anybody ever wrote. She's so proud of it she shows it to everybody that comes and shows them your autograph on the first leaf, and you ought to hear her say:

"My sister's the most stately and beautiful woman I ever saw!"

She imitated her mother's tones in a way that made Ellen smile. She had meant to express her surprise that she had not read her book carefully. Rose apologized so skilfully, the intended rebuke ended in a glow of personal vanity. She had been flattered before by men and women, but there was something so frank and

real in this unsophisticated girl's admiration it gave her new strength.

"Well, I'll have you read that first, and we'll be better acquainted with each other."

"I'll read it right away," was the eager response.

Ellen gently and skilfully set about to draw out her ideal of the woman of to-day.

"Tell me, what is the dearest wish of your heart?"

Rose smiled.

"You'll not laugh?"

"No."

"Marry a fine man and have about six or seven children!"

"Is that all?"

"Isn't that enough children?"

"Quite."

"Well, maybe eight. But I think ten's really too many. They seem to get on top of one another if there's that many, don't you think?"

"I agree with you," Ellen responded gravely.

"We had a neighbor in Texas who had ten and the mother could never keep their faces washed all at one time. I think that's awful, don't you?"

"Very bad."

The leader of the crusade was searching for a possible opening in which to lodge a revolutionary idea. It

would be cruel and unwise to strike her in the face with the declaration of her creed.

"Aren't you afraid of being the slave of a man if you marry?" Ellen inquired cautiously.

"Gracious, no; I expect to be!"

"But don't you want to develop yourself, dear?"

Rose studied her aunt's question.

"You mean study and read and work as you tell me?"

"I mean more than that. I mean when you've finished your school days, don't you want to go on developing yourself?"

She shook her head promptly.

"No. I want to give all of myself to my home and the kids."

Ellen broke into a hearty laugh. Her job was larger than she had figured. Evidently this fair miniature of herself was a striking example of a reversion to type. Probably her poor mother had felt the task hopeless and took the radical step of breaking her environment at home once and forever.

Grave misgivings of the outcome of her teaching rose. The little one had decided opinions of her own when put to the test. There was no hesitation about her answers when she was sure of no offence. It would be necessary to use the utmost care in approaching her positive personality.

Ellen was gravely studying the fine face bent in earnest over her book when Manning's rap startled her.

"Run now, dear, and study in your room while Mr. Manning and I work."

"Let me stay just a minute?" she pleaded.

"What for?"

"Just to say 'howdy do'!"

Ellen hesitated.

"All right; just five minutes; and then to your work."

Rose flushed with excitement as he rapped the second time.

"Oh, I think he's just grand!" she murmured as Ellen opened the door.

She had been careful to give Manning the full view of the room, with Rose in the background as he entered. A thoughtless word or kiss might have been awkward.

His greeting was so carefully casual Ellen resented it and yet was exactly as he should have made it.

He waved his arm toward Rose.

"Good-morning, little one!"

"Good-morning!" she responded cheerily.

"Ready for the typewriting?"

"When auntie gets the machine."

"Well, she'll be getting it soon. I feel like work to-day — and you, Miss West?"

"Never more fit, sir," was the prompt answer.

Again she resented the conventional "Miss" he had put before her name. What else could he do? It irritated her to be compelled to recognize the fact that he was doing the only thing that was possible under the conditions.

Rose lingered.

Her aunt turned at last and said:

"Run along now, child, and read until I call you."

"All right; but do let me help if I can!"

Manning waved to her retreating figure.

"The minute Act I is ready the typewriting begins."

"I drew her out this morning," Ellen said laughingly when she had disappeared.

"On what?"

"The cause of woman."

"I can tell you her views."

"Yes?"

"Shall I?"

"Try."

"She's your miniature in face and budding form — a complete reversion to type in character."

"Correct."

"Her one dream in life is hubby, home and baby."

"No?"

"Babies! Seven!"

"Really?"

They both laughed.

"She had thought of eight, possibly, but drew the line at ten."

"Well, I'm glad there's some trace of restraint."

Manning caught Ellen's keen eyes studying him intently. His laughter had been real, his enjoyment of the joke genuine, and yet she wondered if he had quite concealed his admiration for the lovely, fresh young girl and her appealing ideal.

He dropped his eyes unconsciously before her gaze. She had uncanny intuitions. There was no doubt of her ability at times to read his thoughts. He was not surprised when she said musingly:

"You admire her?"

"I think she's adorable," was the frank reply.

"Because she's so much like me or unlike me?"

"Both."

"Oh ——!"

"When I look at her I see you in the first dawn of an exquisite girlhood. When she begins to talk I hear the old-fashioned songs and lullabies. But we must get to work. Come; that plot has been deviling the soul out of my body the past night. I can't get it right."

Her eyes were still searching him. She was puzzled. An ugly fear had suddenly gripped her. It was too ugly to be real. It was too ugly to frame into speech. She could only shiver at the thought of it. Her first impulse was to send Rose O'Neil packing home on the next train. It was too mean and cowardly for a serious consideration. Besides, the child had caught her heart with a queer tenderness. She had been happy to feel her near. She had slept sounder because she was in the next room.

With an effort she threw off the morbid fancy and hurried to the table, on which were piled their papers of the play.

In the rush of work she forgot the ugly thought, absorbed in the problems of the drama. At the end of two hours they were no nearer the solution than at the beginning.

"Let's call Rose down and try the story on her?" Manning suggested.

Ellen threw him a startled look.

"Absurd!"

"Not at all, I assure you," he insisted.

"A twenty-year-old school girl — you must think her inspired."

"Far from it. On the other hand, her mind is precisely the medium through which we must put our story

if addressed to an audience. I haven't studied the technique of playwriting as you have. But I have studied the mind of the mob. I did some public speaking, and the thing interested me enormously. Some great books have been written on the psychology of the crowd. It's entirely different from the mind of the individual reader."

"Nonsense."

"It's true. You can only get into the head of an audience what will get into the head of the lowest intelligences in it. If you have a thousand college professors before you and mix among them a hundred chamber-maids, you have poured a gallon of ink into a barrel of clear water. The mixture is the medium through which you must pass your rays of light to make your mental impression in the crowd. You can cut any sort of mental gymnastics in a story that is written for an individual reader who sits alone by the fire and reads at his leisure. When you address an audience your proposition must be simple, your process of reasoning elemental."

Ellen had received the suggestion of submitting the plot to Rose with a quick return of her morbid fancy. She had watched Manning begin his philosophic explanation with even greater suspicions. At the end of his long speech she not only found herself convinced, but

was heartily ashamed of her foolish fears and her unfair suspicions.

She made up her mind, once for all, to put jealous suspicions out of her heart forever, otherwise there would be no end of unhappy bickering and quarrelling.

She smiled admiringly.

"Really, man, she said banteringly, "you speak with almost human intelligence."

He bowed humbly.

"Thanks."

"We'll call Rose at once and try it on her."

"Of course the experiment can only be approximately correct."

"We should have a crowd of Roses?"

"Exactly."

Ellen called and the girl appeared on the balcony.

"Come down, dear, and help us now."

There was the swish of a skirt and she seemed to clear the narrow stairs at a bound.

In a moment she stood before them flushed and excited.

"What'll I do — what'll I do?" she cried.

Manning caught the eager longing for service in the tones of her soft rich voice. Whatever there might be of selfish purpose in the warp and woof of this ador-

able little creature, there was no thought of self-development.

"Thank God for that!" he muttered to himself.

"Sit down, dear," Ellen said. "We want you to hear the story of our play and tell us what you think of it."

"I'm afraid I don't know enough."

"You don't have to know anything, child," Manning assured her. "Just sit there and enjoy it, if you can."

Rose smiled her relief, switched her gingham skirts deftly and sat down.

"Oh, is that all? I can do that, I'm sure."

Ellen read the story of the play with all the feeling and delicate shading of thought which her fine voice could give to its words. Manning slouched low in his chair and watched the face of the girl. A more sensitive and exquisite mouth he had never imagined. In its lines it was the reproduction of Ellen's, but about it lingered a charm the older woman had never known. The slightest shade of wit registered with unerring accuracy on the delicate lips. The slightest touch of excitement in the story flashed from her eyes redoubled in intensity. Her whole personality radiated faith, worship, tenderness, and the spirit of self-effacement.

Manning felt the pangs of the old heart-hunger for

a home and babies with cruel force. The sight of her eager face fired his imagination. He forgot the story of the play and waked with a start as Rose leaped from her seat clapping her hands.

"It's beautiful, Aunt Ellen! It's wonderful!"

"You really think so, dear? What did you like about it?"

"Oh, I think the hero's grand!"

Manning winked at Ellen.

"And the heroine?"

"She's a little queer."

Manning laughed and Ellen frowned.

"But it's so exciting. I almost screamed once. Did you hear me?"

She turned her question to Manning.

"No, but I saw you crying."

"That wasn't the time I was so excited — I cried three times."

Manning smiled.

"All right, little audience, we thank you very much for your kind assistance at our opening performance. I'll send a machine down at once and you can give us three copies of this story to-night — will you?"

"Will I? I'm just dying to get at it!"

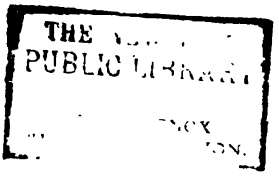
The girl's faith was contagious. The writers took new courage.

"To-morrow we'll begin the dialogue of the first act," Ellen said enthusiastically.

"Good. I'll come early," Manning responded.

And all the way back to his apartment he saw the flashing, mobile, sensitive face of the miniature of Ellen.

ELLEN READ THE STORY OF THE PLAY.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CHAPTER XVIII

THE DISCOVERY

THREE months of joyous work on the play followed swiftly, with the little spirit of joyous service fluttering from one desk to the other and back to her typewriter.

The days had not been without their hours of silent misery for Ellen. She had lost the lover in the comrade and worker. Rose's presence had, of course, made their love-life more difficult, but she couldn't get out of her head the impression that somehow Manning had taken undue advantage of it.

To reproach him was impossible. She would die sooner than humiliate herself in this abject way. A wife might nag her husband for neglect — they were bound by legal chains. She had the legal right to nag and he must submit. She was free. Manning was free. He was not expected to guarantee the beat of his heart. She had not demanded it. She could not expect it.

She had sought in vain for a trace of undue interest in Rose. His attitude toward the girl was scrupulously correct. When she thought of it carefully, it was painfully correct. He seemed to be on his guard. That she

decidedly did not like. It was the only ominous sign on which her morbid fancy could settle.

The more she watched, the less she found for suspicion. Her fears were gradually stilled.

The play was accepted, and the whirlwind of excitement on its production had reached the climax of the final dress rehearsal.

The night had been a storm of emotion such as Ellen had never dreamed possible on earth. She had supposed a dress rehearsal to be something of a formal orderly production of the finished play. She had found it the culmination of all the troubles of director, stage hands, managers, property man, electricians, press agents, and authors.

Manning had generously disclaimed any knowledge of the technique of the drama and insisted that Ellen should have full charge of the production.

The entire burden of the rehearsals, so far as changes demanded, fell on her. She had fought fiercely with the director over an important change which he had asked in the first act and had refused to budge an inch.

The managers were on hand to-night to sit in final judgment. When the curtain came down on the first act, they pounced on the author with the emphatic demand that the change be made in accordance with the director's views.

As a matter of fact they were right, but with her lack of practical experience she refused to see it.

The managers didn't argue. They merely issued an order to the director.

"Cut that scene out. It's no good. It stops the whole action of the play."

"You'll never put on another play of mine!" Ellen snapped.

The senior manager smiled.

"This is the play we've got our money in now, Miss West; we must get it right for the benefit of everybody concerned."

Ellen was so enraged she sat in sullen silence for the next two acts and let them do exactly as they pleased. She had consigned the whole thing to the bottomless pit. And yet she sat fascinated as she watched for the first time the puppets of her imagination live and move and breathe before her eyes.

It was twelve o'clock before the fourth act was called. A break in the scene set caused a long delay, and while the noise of saw and hammer rang behind the curtain Ellen rose and wandered down the dimly lighted side-aisle to the rear of the orchestra.

Behind the heavy curtains above the rear orchestra rail she heard the low hum of conversation, and the

unmistakable voice of Manning. She stopped and listened to be sure. There could be no mistake about it. The other voice was a woman's. She listened intently. It was soft and low, but she couldn't be mistaken. Rose was his companion.

Her heart stood still in sudden anguish. How long had they been there? Perhaps two hours. She had been so infuriated over the demand of the managers and so overwhelmed with the sense of confusion, turmoil and excitement she had lost the track of time.

She moved instinctively toward the curtain, unable to resist the desire to hear what they were saying. She reproached herself bitterly for the disgraceful act, but her muscles refused to retreat.

Manning's voice was tenderly modulated with unconscious effort.

The girl's voice quivered with emotion.

"But Aunt Ellen will be furious when she knows you struck your name off the program," she said.

"And what of it, Miss Rose. It's done, and she can't undo it."

At least he had said "Miss Rose"! Again she caught the conscious determination of restraint. There was no longer a question about the meaning of her eager, tender tones. She was in love with Manning!

Ellen felt her knees suddenly give and her hand

gripped the rail within two feet of their heads. She steadied herself and listened.

"I know you only wrote the story," Rose insisted, "but my auntie's too generous to allow you to be denied the credit of half the work."

"You think I've done half?" he asked.

"Of course, auntie says so too."

"But I don't know a thing about play-writing, child. It's all Greek to me. I refuse to pose as a dramatist."

"Why don't you write stories, then?" she suddenly asked in low eager tones.

Ellen could see the little soft hand unconsciously gripping his arm with the question.

"You think I could?" he asked carelessly.

"I know you could! You could write a big novel if you tried."

"Think so?"

"I know it."

"Would you do the typewriting for me?"

"If auntie will let me. I'm sure she would. She'll feel terribly when she finds out your name's not on the program."

Ellen could hear no more. She felt her way through the darkness and down the aisle to her seat again.

The play faded from her brain. The fourth act was called and played to the finish without a single scene or word reaching her.

The tragedy of her own life blinded her in sickening, vivid flashes.

Rose could not dream of the truth of her relations to Manning. Her love had been the normal development of their daily association under such conditions. His high sense of honor and loyalty had held him from word or deed that might betray his feelings.

It couldn't be possible that he had really fallen in love with this simple child! But four years had passed since their mystic wedding night in the log cottage on the cliff. They had their quarrels and differences as all people of positive personality must in daily contact with one another. But this ——

"Oh, dear God, no—no—no!" she sobbed in anguish. "It can't be true—it just can't!"

And yet the longer she thought of it, the more probable the thing became. His ideal of home and children had been a deathless passion from the first. Her failure to satisfy this passion had been the secret of their quarrels and unhappiness. Rose had suddenly appeared the image of his first love, born again in vivid fascinating youth, with every beat of her heart keeping time to his dream.

Her heart sank in panic. How could he help falling in love with her? She was young, she was beautiful, she was sweet and unselfish. And her ideal was the old-fashioned one of passionate self-sacrifice.

And yet when she recalled their conversation no word of love had been spoken or hinted between them. Why had she leaped at this wild conclusion?

She pulled herself together.

She would watch and wait developments. To send her niece home was unthinkable. She had become a part of her own life. She loved her dearly. To confess her fears to the man on whom she had forced a free alliance was equally impossible.

At one o'clock the rehearsal closed. She said good-night to Manning in a stupor.

"I'm too tired to talk, dear," she whispered to him wearily. "Don't come home with me. Rose and I will walk alone and get some fresh air."

"All right, to-morrow night, then, for the great event! I'll meet you here at seven-thirty."

Rose chattered for half a dozen blocks in endless, joyful excitement.

She paused at last, conscious of something wrong.

"What's the matter, honey?" she questioned, anxiously trying to peer into Ellen's eyes. She had just passed her twenty-first birthday and had begun in

moments of stress to use the old Southern word of endearment to express anxiety or tenderness.

"Just worn to a frazzle, dear," her aunt replied. "I'm so sore and worn out with that miserable rehearsal. It was the very worst we ever had. I feel as if I could die with a sense of joyous relief."

The girl's grip tightened on her arm.

"I was so scared for a minute. I was afraid you were sick."

"I'll be all right to-morrow, honey," Ellen answered, smiling wanly.

Rose was quick to match the imitation of her pet name.

"You don't mind if I call you 'Honey,' do you?" she asked timidly. "You know how I love you!"

"Of course not, silly child."

She laid her hand tenderly on Rose's.

"I love you, too, my sweet little miniature. I just haven't learned to be as happy as you are."

Through a night of soul-searching questions Ellen faced the tragedy whose shadows she felt creeping closer.

CHAPTER XIX

BURIED ALIVE

FOR Ellen West the première of her first play was an event of minor importance, completely submerged in the flood of misery which swept her soul.

The audience received the piece coldly. Its brilliant dialogue made no headway against their indifference to the theme of social propaganda. The fashionable crowd came to be amused. They resented instruction.

Ellen saw the fatal notice posted at eleven o'clock on the bulletin board announcing the close at the end of the customary two weeks. It was a matter of supreme indifference to her whether it closed or ran ten years.

Rose gripped her arm and stared at the notice.

"What are they going to close it for, auntie?"

"It's a failure, my dear."

"Failure," she gasped.

"A 'frost,' the manager kindly told me."

"Why, they laughed and cheered."

"Yes, child, we had some personal friends out front who did the best they could for us."

Rose was the only one of the three who took the failure seriously.

Manning's spirits rebounded immediately, although he had thought a success assured. He had planned an elaborate supper at the Astor in celebration. In reality, he meant that the two authors should give the supper in honor of their little typewriter girl, whose joy would be tenfold greater than theirs.

"We'll celebrate anyhow!" he announced cheerfully as he read the bulletin.

"I'd rather not," Ellen protested.

"Nonsense; come along, the supper's all ordered."

Ellen shook her head.

"Please, auntie, I've never been to the Astor."

There was no help for it. She couldn't refuse Rose's eager plea.

The throng in the restaurant depressed Ellen's spirits. Every table was crowded with gay theatre parties. The chatter and laughing was continuous. The music seemed a double mockery. Her heart was lead.

The thing that puzzled and still further alarmed her was the bubbling gaiety with which Manning took the failure. There was something sinister about it. No man could throw months of hard work into the waste basket with a laugh unless he had some secret joy in his heart.

She watched his attitude toward Rose. His face was a mask of friendly conventional propriety. She studied the tones of his voice. In not a single word or accent did he betray the slightest interest beyond that which an author might feel in the disappointment of his typewriter girl over the failure of his work.

The supper was finished and he had lighted a cigar before the announcement came that took her breath.

"You wonder why I'm gay to-night?" he asked Ellen.

"Yes."

"I've something more exciting to think about than our failure. I don't know the trick of the play anyhow. But I've always had a sneaking idea that I could write a novel ——"

He paused. Ellen's heart fairly stopped its beat and Rose's eyes danced with excitement.

"The whole story flashed on me last night after the rehearsal," he went on eagerly. "I worked out the plot in two hours, went to bed and slept soundly. I got up this morning with the whole thing a living inspiration. I can see my characters as clearly as if I'd known them a lifetime. I can write it in two months. The die is cast — the Rubicon crossed. I quit the soul-racking grind of a daily newspaper to-morrow."

"Give up your position?" Ellen gasped.

"Without a sigh. I've saved enough to live two years.

The worst that could happen would be a failure. I can always make a living on a paper if I have to. But what's the use of living a slave's life if you can be free? Why crawl if you can fly? I believe I can fly."

"I just know it," Rose broke in enthusiastically.

"You're very foolish to give up your big job on Brown's paper until you try your wings," Ellen observed evenly.

"I tried them last night and they worked. All I need is the chance to concentrate every ounce of my brains on this one job until it's done. I shall resent the necessity of eating and sleeping. I suppose I'll have to yield a point there. But on all others, I shall be adamant — no mail, no telephone calls, no visitors, no communication with the world until I find my pathway among the stars!"

Ellen's eyes flashed with anger. Rose's face was a curious mixture of elation and disappointment.

"How'll you get the manuscript to me for the typewriter?" she faltered.

"Send it by a messenger from my secret den."

"Oh!"

"Yes. I'll clear out of my apartment to shake the boys. I'll take a bare room in a good boarding-house, where I can have my meals served alone on my desk

and bury myself there for two months. I'll emerge with the finished book in my hands or I'll die in the effort."

Rose clapped her hands and laughed.

"You can do it! I know you can; don't you believe it, auntie?"

"Such things have been done, my dear," was the grave answer.

"And you begin to-morrow?" she added.

"To-morrow at ten o'clock. I've already found my den and given up my job."

"Oh, my, isn't it exciting!" Rose exclaimed.

Ellen felt a hot tear dimming her eyes in spite of her iron will. The subtle cruelty of his scheme of announcing his break with her for two months before Rose, where protest or argument would be impossible, fairly stunned her. To argue before Rose was, of course, out of the question. To argue at all under such circumstances her pride would forbid. On this he had reckoned with absolute certainty.

This sudden sweeping inspiration might be a fact, or it might be the simplest subterfuge through which to break their love relations for two months. If he had waked suddenly to the realization that he had wearied of her and fallen in love with her niece, his inner sense of honor and decency would make a break in-

evitable. He could have hit on no safer or more delicate scheme.

She could but admire his ingenuity. Yet nothing could still the dull, suffocating ache within. Submission to his voluntary exile was inevitable. She felt herself choking for a moment, recovered herself, and spoke with gentle irony:

"I'm afraid Rose and I will miss you very much."

"Terribly!" Rose added.

"It'll be done in a jiffy, and I'll emerge an author."

His faith was so strong and so genuine Ellen caught its contagion. He certainly meant it. She knew him too well — knew the processes of his mind too intimately to doubt now that he was in dead earnest.

She reproached herself for her doubts at all. Had he not proven his sincerity by resigning his position and risking all on the venture?

She tried to smile an honest wish for success when she took his hand to say good-night as he handed them into a cab. She still half hoped that he would accompany them home and steal a chance for a word alone. He made no sign and she knew that he wished to avoid it.

"You know that I wish you the greatest success of your life in this mad venture. I shall await your return from the grave."

"Send me the manuscript as fast as you can," Rose

said. "I'll be just crazy to read it! And I'll see it first, won't I? I'll let auntie read the nice clean copy."

"And send it back to me; two copies, won't you, as fast as it's done, chapter by chapter?"

His voice was casually business-like. If he were in love with Rose, he was a past master in the control of his emotions.

Ellen pressed his hand with a little grip of parting anguish and sank back to her seat in the shadows in time to prevent his seeing the tears that came in spite of her effort at self-control. She brushed them away before Rose could notice her emotion.

CHAPTER XX

THE SURRENDER

THE reaction of anger following Manning's voluntary burial in his book sustained Ellen's spirits. Through pride every instinct of her strong character came to the rescue. By every law of the new creed of life she had achieved an individual personality. She had refused to merge herself or submerge herself in man. She summoned every energy of her being now to battle for her principles.

For two weeks she resolutely put Manning out of her thoughts. She wrote with renewed inspiration on her favorite themes.

She refused Rose's enthusiastic appeals to read his manuscript. She refused to touch it.

"Please read just this one chapter, auntie," the enthusiastic young typist urged one day. "It's wonderful. I've just cried my eyes out over it."

"No, dear," was the firm reply. "I prefer to wait and read the finished book; I'll enjoy it more."

She made up her mind never to read it, unless ——

"Bah!" she cried in disgust; "I'm always making

idiotic conditions to every fine resolution, unless, of course, he comes with true repentance for his brutal cruelty and apologizes."

She paused and smiled bitterly. She couldn't imagine him apologizing again. He had gotten out of that habit. As he had grown in strength of character and found the poise which success among his equals brought, something had hardened inside. She dismissed the idea angrily.

She was watching Rose work with tireless energy. Her nimble fingers fairly flew over the keys of the machine. She rarely paused to correct an error. She read his scrawling penciled manuscript with curiously accurate instinct.

She had finished the copy on hand and placed it in the big square Manila envelope for the messenger, who arrived daily at twelve o'clock. She was writing a note to place inside.

Ellen's heart gave a sudden leap. They were evidently carrying on a daily exchange of letters by the messenger boy!

She rose and stood beside the girl's desk.

"Writing him a love-letter, dear?" she asked calmly.

Rose started and blushed.

"I'll show you his note to me," she answered eagerly.

She rummaged among the papers in the drawer and

drew out a crumpled piece of cheap manuscript paper on which Manning had scrawled:

> "Thanks, dear little Typewriter, for your beautiful copy. I can't believe my eyes when I see what you make out of the awful stuff I send you. Sometimes I can't read it myself. You must have X-rays in your eyes to read it so clearly. I congratulate you and I thank you.
>
> MANNING."

"And this is what I've written in reply." She handed her aunt the sheet of paper on which she had been writing.

> DEAR MR. AUTHOR:
>
> You make me very happy with your flattering note. Please write a little plainer and I can go much faster.
>
> YOUR TYPEWRITER.

Ellen smiled when she had finished the harmless epistle.

Rose searched her face for the meaning of her smile.

"Do you think that word 'flattering' is too bold?"

"No."

"I'll strike it out if you think so?"

"I don't think he will misinterpret it, dear," she answered gravely.

"All right; I'll put it with the manuscript, then."

She folded and placed her note in the big envelope containing the manuscript.

Ellen watched her tenderly.

"You shouldn't fold it."

"Why?"

"He's so rushed and absorbed in work he'll yank the manuscript out and never see it."

"How'll I fix it?" she asked anxiously.

"Unfold it and fasten the full page with a clip across the manuscript, and then he can't neglect your message."

"That's so, isn't it?"

She hurriedly did as Ellen had told her and just finished as the messenger boy arrived with a new chapter.

"Here you are, boy," Rose said briskly. "And don't you lose it now; I've got a note in this one."

The boy threw her a look of pain and extended his slip for her signature without condescending to words.

It was impossible to discover in the two brief messages the slightest trace of the love-affair she had feared, and yet the fact that she had discovered this underground correspondence made Ellen miserable. All the strength of her anger melted.

He had pushed her out of his life as a troublesome

intruder. This enthusiastic, helpful, mere child he had taken into the intimacy of his daily thought. And she was helping him. That was what cut. The girl was giving her soul and body in utter self-sacrifice, while his chosen mate stood by and watched in helpless misery.

There was something radically wrong with her theory of a free alliance! For the first time she faced it squarely. Her world of ideals and theories began to crumble. The ground beneath her feet gave way and the shock was an emotional earthquake.

She had lost the way of life in her search for self-development! This child was finding it before her eyes in the old-time worn way of self-sacrifice. There might be yet time to repair the tragic blunder.

She made up her mind. She would throw pride to the winds. She would wait in patient anguish until Manning had finished his book and then surrender — unconditionally — joyfully.

The thought of it gave her courage. She would redouble her efforts at writing. Her editorial work was far in advance of the needs of the magazine. She was specially thankful for this just now. She was not in the mood for radical propaganda. She would devote herself with furious energy to the writing of a series of short-stories which she had planned for years. Work

was her only refuge from madness until she could see Manning, tell him her suffering and make the last effort to save herself from wreck.

The blackest days of life she had spent since his disappearance. If he had placed a continent or an ocean between them she could have borne the separation with philosophy. There was something of the stoic in the rock foundation of her character. The thing that had all but driven her mad was the fact that he was perhaps within a stone's throw of his old apartment on Thirty-first Street and yet he had completely shut her from his life.

The decision to surrender brought relief from the strain of an anguish which had been unbearable. She would surprise him with the complete acceptance of his views of life. She would make her surrender so complete, so tenderly appealing, no shadow could ever again darken the home they would build.

She began to wonder at the supreme folly of her self-centered program. No wonder she had failed to hold him! She ought to have failed. Thank God, she had awakened in time!

The plan of complete reconciliation once settled in her mind, she worked on her stories with untiring zeal. She must finish the whole series of six by the time he completed his manuscript. She set her head to the task

with the determination to show him her manuscript the day he would assemble his.

She finished two days before he sent his last chapter to Rose, and spent the time in leisurely revision and retouching. The hours were not without their tension of anxiety and foreboding. She wondered if he would call. He must, of course. They had parted in good humor. There had been no quarrel; no harsh words to regret.

Rose's final verdict on his book had profoundly excited her.

"It's *great*, Aunt Ellen!" she cried in breathless excitement. "I've cried my eyes out the past week. It's the most beautiful book I ever read in all my life! It's so real, you can just see and feel the people in it."

Unless she had lost all sense of proportion in her enthusiasm, it would certainly make a hit. Such a verdict from a girl of twenty-one meant a sensational success.

He would probably take it to the publishers the day following and call that evening.

Three days passed without a word. It was ominous! Rose was evidently surprised and shocked; too surprised and shocked to ask her aunt why he stayed away. She had been present when he announced his plan of work and his complete isolation for two months. She,

too, had supposed that he would call at once on the completion of his task.

Ellen caught the look of anxiety in the girl's face and couldn't keep silent.

"I'm afraid Mr. Manning is ill, dear," she said anxiously.

"Do you think so?" Rose whispered.

"I'll call up his apartment."

"Yes, do."

She rang his number and waited in breathless silence while some one fumbled the receiver at the other end.

A strange voice answered.

"Yes, this is Mr. Manning's apartment."

"May I speak to him, please?"

"Mr. Manning is not here."

"Who is this, please?"

"Mr. Bates of the publishing house of Alfred Bates & Company. I have just packed him off in my car for a month's rest at my country-place at Lakewood."

"Was — he — ill?" Ellen gasped.

"Quite," was the frank reply. "He has suffered a complete nervous collapse from overwork. The doctor has forbidden him to see a friend, write or receive a letter without his permission. A trained nurse was sent with him."

Ellen recovered herself with a desperate effort and spoke evenly:

"This is Miss West, Mr. Bates. I am terribly shocked. My niece did the typewriting of his book. You know, perhaps, that we collaborated in a play this winter."

"Oh, yes, Miss West. I'm glad you called. He was talking of you and your niece in his fever and seemed greatly distressed at leaving without seeing you. We managed to complete our contracts for the immediate publication of his book."

"You've accepted it, then?"

"We seized it within forty-eight hours after we saw it. We are doing a most unusual thing. We are so sure of the sensation it will produce, we have ordered a first edition of fifty thousand copies. His fame and fortune are assured."

"His illness will not be serious?"

"A month of absolute rest will put him on his feet again."

"You're sure?"

"Absolutely. The doctor says he will be all right sooner, but he will keep him quiet a month if he has to chain him."

"He can't receive a letter from any one?"

"The doctor has sternly forbidden it."

"Thank you,"

She slowly hung up the receiver and faced the tense look of her niece.

"What's the matter with him, auntie?" she faltered.

"He's very ill, dear; a nervous breakdown from overwork."

"He'll get well, though," she said firmly.

"The doctor says so; Yes, and Bates & Co. have accepted his book."

"Of course; I knew they would."

"They say it will be an enormous sensation."

"Of course."

There was a far-off look in the young eyes that was uncanny and Ellen caught it with a feeling of dumb misery.

CHAPTER XXI

THE REFUSAL

THREE desolate winter months passed and still Manning remained under the doctor's care. Not a line had been received from him. Ellen's heart sank at the bitter thought. Surely he might have dared a doctor's orders and sent a word to say that she had not been forgotten.

She kept in touch with him through Bates, the head of his publishing house. She called his telephone and asked boldly and directly about his health. She had ceased to care what he thought, although he was the most conventional of New England churchmen.

An occasional letter from Lucy Sheldon barely mentioned Manning's illness and always with the certain assurance of his early recovery.

Ellen resolutely closed her eyes to the dumb misery of her niece. She refused to recognize the possibility of the thing she feared. She would know only the depth and despair of her own love and the resolution to fight her way back into Manning's heart and life. There was no such word as fail. The strength of this resolution gave her the courage to fight despair.

She stood at her window and watched the snow swirl in blinding sheets against the big building opposite in the fiercest storm of the winter. It had broken on the swelling buds of the trees late in March. For twenty-four hours it had raged with unabated fury. The snow had piled in huge drifts against the buildings on the east side of the avenue and covered the square in white fantastic hills, ravines and valleys.

The tempest soothed the tumult of her heart. She watched the swaying trees and the brave traveller here and there battling with the fierce winds in a pensive and passive mood. What was the use of standing stiff and straight to take the lash of the storm? It was better to bend as the swaying branches of those elms and let it pass. It must pass. All sorrows must pass. The sun must shine to-morrow or the next day.

Through the swirling clouds of snow she saw emerging the figure of a tiny messenger boy battling against the storm. He was crossing the square toward the avenue.

Instantly she leaped at the idea that he was bringing a message to her through the blinding mists of the snow. The idea became a certainty when he crossed the avenue and sought the shelter of the western side. She sprang to her door, opened it, and leaned over the stair rail. Her hands were trembling.

"Silly fool!" she muttered.

Not a sound came from below save the dull roar of the wind in the vestibule at the entrance on the level of the street. He wouldn't ring the old-fashioned bell. The front door was never locked in the daytime. Her heart sank. He had passed, of course. The front door suddenly opened and a gust of freezing air rushed upward. She drank it as wine. Her cheeks flushed and she laughed with nervous joy. She waited for a moment and saw the little half-frozen blue figure trudging up the stairs, pulling on the rail as if exhausted.

"Up here, boy!" she cried encouragingly.

"Miss Ellen West?" he called.

"Yes; hurry, please!"

He stopped to rest.

"My Gawd," he wailed, "I'm a hurryin' all I can. I'm froze ter death. I'm plum dead."

Ellen ran down the stairs to meet him, took the telegram and read it.

> "Will arrive New York at eleven a. m. to-morrow morning and call immediately.
>
> MANNING."

She felt herself sway uncertainly for an instant and caught the rail in time to steady her nerves. The boy had seated himself on the stairs, indifferent to passing events. He was so tired and cold nothing mattered.

Ellen saw the crouching, shivering bundle at her feet, roused herself and drew him after her into the warm room. His face was dirty and his eyes bleared, but he was beautiful to her dreaming eyes. He had brought glad tidings! She gave him a cup of hot coffee, stuffed him with doughnuts, and sent him down the steps whistling.

She took time to compose herself before announcing to Rose the news. To have permitted the girl to see her silly tears of joy, her flushed cheeks and trembling hands would have been an abject confession. She shivered at the thought. Fortunately, Rose was in her room and had not heard the messenger boy enter.

She climbed the stairs to the balcony and placed her hand on the door knob, paused suddenly and decided to call her message without entering. She was ashamed to confess her cowardice, but in her heart of hearts she was afraid her niece might betray the secret which she had sworn to herself could not exist.

She gripped the knob firmly and called:

"Rose, dear!"

"Yes, honey."

"I've just received a telegram from Mr. Manning."

"He's — not — dead?"

"Well, he couldn't wire us if he were."

"He's coming?"

"Yes; to-morrow at eleven o'clock."

There was no answer; only a faint little smothered cry.

"Don't stop your work now, dear. Do more than usual so you can take to-morrow morning off."

"Yes'm," came the low answer.

In spite of her resolve not to know what Rose really felt toward Manning, Ellen caught herself listening eagerly to every accent of her answers. In no way did she reveal anything. The excitement she had shown would be perfectly natural under the circumstances. Her interest in Manning as his typewriter would account for it, to say nothing of the fact that he was her aunt's collaborator and best friend.

Besides, the book which she had typed for him had made a sensation. The first edition of a hundred thousand copies had been sold and a second edition twice as large was on the press. His royalties from these two editions would be ninety thousand dollars. His name was on every lip in the world of letters. His fame was already nation-wide.

Whatever her personal attitude toward Manning, the child would feel the deepest interest always in his career. Ellen not only refused to face the possibility of her niece's love; she had convinced herself that the idea was absurd.

At eleven o'clock next morning she seized her telephone and called the Pennsylvania station. The train from Lakewood was twenty minutes late on account of the storm.

"Go back to your studies, dear," she said gently to Rose. "I'll call you when he arrives. The train will be more than an hour late to-day. The snow is drifting."

"All right, honey," was the cheerful reply.

The girl had a beautiful spirit. To know her was to love her. For just an instant an ugly wish flashed through Ellen's heart. Why couldn't she have been a little more selfish and mean? She dismissed it with scorn for her own weakness.

She had sent Rose back to her studies, not because she really believed the train would be an hour late, but because she must have a few minutes alone with Manning. And it must be at once. It would be unendurable to sit quietly before Rose and talk conventionally with the storm raging within her soul.

At twenty minutes past eleven she heard his footfall on the stairs. She leaped to her feet. The train had made up time. Could she control herself? She must. To throw herself into his arms was her first impulse. To have him release himself would be the last straw. It wouldn't do. She must give him the assurance first of her conversion to his ideals—of her complete accept-

ance of his way in life. She must take time to clear all differences from their pathway. She must remember that he was still free by an act of her own will. Rose could not hear their conversation in the living-room below.

With an effort she steadied herself for the meeting and opened the door. The shock of his appearance unnerved her. He extended his hand with an uncertain movement, as if dizzy, and his step was shuffling. His eyes were widely distended and sunk deep in his projecting forehead. They burned with a feverishly bright light.

She tried to speak and couldn't. She held his hand tightly and assisted him to a chair.

"I really shouldn't have come to-day," he apologized. "The doctor refused permission. I told him to go to the devil and I came to New York."

"I'm afraid it was unwise," she faltered.

"I had to come. I had to see you for a few minutes."

Ellen's lips quivered.

"They tell me," he went on quickly, "that I must go further south for a long stay ——"

He paused in apparent embarrassment.

Ellen looked into his eyes with tender yearning.

There was an absent stare in them that saw nothing.

"Before you say anything," she began in low tones,

"I've something to tell you. In the long hours of abject misery through which I've passed since I lost you I've been born again — born of the spirit, I think. I have ceased to desire self-development. My one wish has been and is to help you. I have changed my views of life. I have returned to the old creed of woman's complete merging in the life of her mate. I'll marry you now, dear love-man, if you will ask me."

Her voice had sunk to a whisper in her last words. He sat as if in a trance, his eyes shining with a strange brilliance. She waited until it was impossible to endure the silence longer.

"Did you hear me?" she inquired gently.

He smiled wanly.

"Yes, dear, I heard you with an unearthly distinctness. I can't realize that it is you who say this to me. I seem to be another man looking down on the scene ——"

He paused and drew a deep breath.

"You see, it's too late for us now."

A cry of anguish came in spite of her effort.

"I must be frank, mustn't I?"

"Yes — yes — go on; it's the only way," she urged.

"In you and me, habit has become fixed. Habit is life — character is the sum total of our habits. We

began all wrong. We kept open shop from the first. There was nothing fixed, nothing settled, except the one thing that could always keep things unsettled — our freedom! Life was one of continuous unrest. Impatience, turmoil, quarrelling, bickering, and suspicion was the only air we could breathe because we were free — and freedom is a challenge to progressive new relations. It would be a fatal mistake for us now to attempt the old régime. It could only end in disappointment and unhappiness for us both."

She lifted her hand.

"Please. It is unnecessary for you to say more."

The old imperious pride was slowly asserting itself. He knew that it would if he were frank. He had made up his mind to be brutally frank. He was glad she had rallied so quickly.

"You came, then, to tell me this before you left for the South?"

"Yes."

"Thank you."

He rose with an effort.

"You will go so soon?" she asked coldly.

"I promised the doctor to take the first train back. I am to leave for the South to-night."

"I'll call Rose."

"Please don't!" he said quickly.

"She will be dreadfully disappointed."

"Yes, I know," he answered thoughtfully, "but I'm not equal to the task of meeting others to-day. I came only to see you."

There was a tone of finality to his voice that angered her.

"I understand," she responded indifferently.

She accompanied him to the door before she thought of the frozen streets.

"You must let me call you a cab."

"Mine is waiting," he said.

Her cheeks flushed. He had planned the final break with her in cold blood! She closed the door without extending her hand or uttering a word. She heard him hesitate a moment as if shocked by her rudeness. And then he slowly descended the stairs.

She turned into the room with firm step, her head erect.

The blow she had received was so brutal, so cruel, it was incredible. Her mind had refused to grasp its full meaning at first. She only dimly realized it yet. Soul and body rose in fierce rebellion.

"Deserted!" she laughed bitterly.

It was bitter, but it was good medicine. It was the tonic needed to save her from collapse. She thanked him for saving her. She would lift up her head now

and go her way. If the world sneered, what matter? She would live her own life in her own way.

She saw a copy of his novel on her desk. She threw it across the room, struck a vase and shattered it.

The noise brought Rose to the balcony.

"What was that? Has he come, auntie?"

"Yes; come down!"

Rose approached with an expression of childlike bewilderment.

"He has come?"

"And gone."

"Gone?"

"Yes."

"And you didn't let me know," she gasped.

"I started to call you and he stopped me." Her voice was hard and cold. Its chill struck the girl's heart.

"He stopped you?" she repeated in wonder.

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Said he didn't want to see anyone. He is a very distinguished man now, honey."

The girl's lips moved as if to speak. She staggered and crumpled on the floor at Ellen's feet.

CHAPTER XXII

THE CONFESSION

FOR a long while after she had regained consciousness Rose remained silent. And then she smiled wanly at her aunt and murmured little apologies.

"I don't know what came over me," she kept on repeating. "I never felt better in my life. My knees just gave way and down I went."

Ellen stroked her hand gently.

"I never fainted in my life before!" she went on. "What could have made me do it, honey?"

Ellen's eyes searched hers for a moment in silence and they were lowered.

"I don't know, dear; but I think you do. Can't you tell me?"

The little hand gripped hers fiercely, her eyes closed and the tears pushed through the trembling lids. Ellen waited until the paroxysm passed, bent and kissed the quivering lips. Two arms stole round her neck and held her fast until the tears came to her own eyes.

"Yes, I will," Rose murmured; "I've got to tell you or die. Oh, auntie——"

She paused and flushed scarlet.

"I'm in love with him. I've worshipped him from the minute we met in this room. I've lived only to see him, to hear his voice — to know that I could be in his life."

"And he loves you?" she asked evenly.

"I know that he does."

"He has told you?"

"No."

"How do you know?"

"In a hundred things that he did. In the way he spoke to me — the caress in his voice — and——"

She blushed and paused again.

"And the way he looked at me. He didn't need to say any words."

"But why didn't he tell you?"

"Something seemed to hold him back. Something I couldn't understand. He tried to tell me and couldn't. But I thought he would. I waited, and loved him more and more."

"Forget him, dear."

"I never can!"

"Many a woman has said that before."

"I don't want to live without him. Why should

he treat me like this, auntie, dear? I'm not ugly!"

"You're beautiful, my child."

"I'm nearly as old as he is. He's not more than ten years older; that's no matter, is it?"

"No."

The thing that alarmed Ellen was the feverish, uncanny expression in her eyes; the look of a young animal that has been mortally wounded. She remembered a kitten with a broken back that looked at her like that once in her childhood. She could see now the wide-set glittering eyes with their expression of dumb wonder before it died.

At least she thanked God that he had the decency to respect her own feelings by silence in this the bitterest and loneliest hour her own soul had ever known. His high sense of honor and of decency might prevent his ever declaring his love to Rose even if the girl's intuitions were correct.

Why add another tragedy to her own? She had sought self-development and lost the way of life in selfishness. Her anger against the man who had deserted her should not be allowed to wreck the happiness of the little girl who trusted her utterly.

Besides, she had given this man the right to go when he saw fit. Against his protest she had forced this freedom upon him. If he had fallen in love with her

niece, how could she reproach him? Her anger and misery were illogical. She had made her life what it was by an act of will.

She saw her way clearly in a sudden flash of unselfish love.

"Would you like me to find out why he left you so abruptly, dear?" Ellen whispered.

Her lips moved, but could say nothing.

The dumb anguish and the unspoken appeal found Ellen's heart.

"I'll see," she said cheerfully. "Be still and leave it all to me now, will you?"

"I've nobody in the world to leave it to, honey, but you and God."

"I'll be back in a minute, dear," Ellen called from the door.

She quickly descended the stairs and rang the telephone of Manning's apartment on Thirty-first Street. If he were leaving for a long stay the chances were ten to one that he would take four or five hours to get his papers and personal effects together before returning to Lakewood.

A new voice answered the telephone.

"Yes, this is Mr. Manning's apartment. I am Mr. Manning's valet. What is it?"

She smiled at the thought of his rise in the world

since the day they met four years ago! From a tiny room on Washington Square to national fame, a fortune, and a valet to attend his personal needs! She threw the thought of petty jealousy from her. He was ill. She was glad he could afford a man.

"May I speak to Mr. Manning, please?" she answered slowly.

"Mr. Manning is lying down. He is quite ill, you know. I have orders not to disturb him. I can't unless it's a matter of great importance."

"It's the gravest importance — it may be a matter of life and death! Please tell him this."

"Your name, madam?"

She hesitated an instant.

"Tell him I am speaking for Miss Rose O'Neil."

She wondered if he would refuse to answer. A refusal would be proof that he didn't care. Or would it be just the opposite? Was his old sense of loyalty still so strong that he would refuse to humiliate the woman he once loved by the acknowledgment before her that he loved another?

She was not long left in doubt. She heard his quick nervous grip on the telephone receiver.

"What is it?"

"This is Ellen."

"Oh!"

"You must come at once to my apartment."

"Please — I'm not equal to it."

"You must come at once!"

"I was sorry afterwards," he went on, "that I was so brutal and abrupt, but it's best after all. I couldn't endure another such scene to-day."

"You don't understand. I am speaking for my niece."

"But you're not really — you don't mean that?"

She caught the tremor in his voice that was unmistakable.

"I do. Surely you know me well enough to realize that I have too much pride to stoop to a lie to get you to the telephone."

"Forgive me," he broke in. "She asked you to call me?"

"No. She is very ill."

"Ill!"

"When I told her that you had called and left without a word she collapsed. You must not go without seeing her."

"Of course — I'll — come — at — once."

His voice was husky with excitement. She could feel in the electric current his nervous tension.

In ten minutes he was mounting her stairs with firmer step than when he called on hour ago.

She could see at a glance that he had recovered himself. He walked with more vigor. His step was quick and nervous as if he were drawing on his last reserve forces, but his voice was under perfect control.

"I hope she's not in a serious condition," he said.

Ellen seated herself and looked at him keenly.

"That depends, I think, on you."

He fumbled his chin nervously and twisted the muscles of his strong mouth.

"On — me — why? What do you mean?"

"Come, now, face it squarely. Be honest with yourself and tell me the truth. I've made up my mind since I closed that door on you an hour ago that the first phase of my life is finished forever!"

She paused and struggled with her emotion.

"I've some hard battles ahead of me," she went on, "but I'll win them. You know this."

"Yes, I know," he said tensely. "You're a marvellous woman."

"You're not to think of me any more. I'll work out my salvation in my own way. You must have your way in life. It's the old way of the trustful, worshipful, helpful little wife with home and babies ——"

Her voice broke in spite of her effort at control. He breathed deeply and looked through the windows on the clearing skies, but made no response.

"I have no reproaches. I had my way. You told me it would be a failure. How tragic it has really been I don't think you will ever know ——"

He raised his hand in protest.

"On the other hand, the certainty that you would suffer is the one thing that hurts me most."

She looked at him gravely.

"It's sweet to hear you say it, though I know that only God can understand all this day has meant to me! But I have fought the last battle with self and I have won."

She rose, slowly crossed the space that separated them and stood over him. She was smiling in the friendliest way.

"Come, now, be fair to yourself! You owe it to me, for I'm going to be your best friend always if I can't be your wife. You're in love with my little Rose — is it not so?"

He set his square jaws firmly.

"Why do you torture me like this?" he asked at last.

"I don't mean it, dear boy! I'm thinking of her too."

He threw a quick, searching look.

"Does — does — she love me?"

"With a love that might kill her kind unless you are good to her."

Tears blinded him and he turned away.

"You know that I love her!"

"I've feared it."

"But I couldn't hurt you by such a declaration."

"Nonsense!" she protested cheerily. "At least you've paid me the high compliment of falling in love with my miniature. And I'll be frank enough to acknowledge that she's prettier than I am. You've won the heart of the dearest and most unselfish little girl in the world. She will make you very happy. I congratulate you!"

She took his hand in a way so friendly and reassuring he could not resist.

"We must not allow our mistakes to spoil three lives," she went on rapidly. "Come — tell my girl that you love her and she'll be laughing all over the place in five minutes."

He held back stubbornly. She drew him out of the chair toward the balcony stairs.

He stopped and blushed.

"I — can — go — to her room?

"Certainly. I'll chaperone you. She's just lying there on the bed, where I put her after she had fainted."

She led him gently up the stairs, pushed him into the room and turned away.

Rose lifted herself on her elbow and stared in rapture.

"Oh — you — have — come — back — to — see — me!" she breathed.

He took her in his arms.

"My Rose!" he whispered as his hand gently touched her hair.

CHAPTER XXII

THE COLLAPSE

ELLEN hurried downstairs. She was mistress of her emotions, but she shrank from the sight of their love-meeting. She sat down quietly beside her window in the bright sunlight. The last cloud had cleared from the skies and the snow mantle flashed in unearthly brilliance.

Her quick mind had determined the action of the drama to its final detail. She would give them half an hour alone, call a clergyman, pack Rose's trunk, marry them on the spot, and send them off together for the South. They probably would not leave Lakewood. He would be well and happy in two weeks.

She called a clergyman on the telephone.

"You can perform a marriage ceremony at three o'clock, Dr. Davis?" she inquired.

"Certainly," was the quick response; "that's one of the joys of my busy life."

"You make out the records yourself, I believe?"

"Yes; in New York a clergyman is the officer of the law charged with full authority and he makes out all the papers. I'll bring them."

"Thank you. Promptly at three, Doctor."

"Promptly at three!"

She hung up the telephone receiver as Manning and Rose entered the library.

She heard the swish of a skirt and the girl leaped into her arms.

"Auntie, darling, you're my honey, fairy-Godmother!"

"My girlie," she murmured.

"He loves me, honey! He loves me — he loves me. I'm the happiest, craziest little fool on earth, and I owe it all to you! You gave me my home — you introduced him to me — you gave me the chance to know and love him — you brought him back to me when he was sick and discouraged — you're an angel!"

Ellen's lips moved without words — only the half articulate crooning of a mother over a babe was heard.

Manning stood at the window watching the street cleaners shoveling the snow. Ellen led Rose to his side and placed her hand in his.

"Well, Mr. Man, I'm going to see that you have it all your own way to-day! I've sent for a clergyman. You are to be married here at three o'clock!"

"What!" he gasped.

Rose gave a cry of wonder and joy.

"Yes, it's all arranged. Rose can pack in an hour. There's no need for a fuss. It will be the best medicine

you can take, my boy. There's no use to argue. I've the habit of having my way, you know. It happens that my way is yours, this time!"

Rose's hand was gripping Manning's with joyous excitement.

"It's all right; I can be ready in a minute!"

"Of course, if she says so; we'll have to do as she says," Manning agreed.

He smiled at Ellen.

She turned to him in a quick, business-like way.

"Run along now, Mr. Man, to your apartment; have your valet get everything ready and be back here with him for a witness with Dora at exactly ten minutes to three."

She hustled him off and helped Rose pack as best she could between the paroxysm of kisses and bear hugs.

It was not until she said good-bye to the bride and groom at the Pennsylvania station that her nerves began to snap.

She felt a sudden nausea and turned to her maid.

"Give me your hand, Dora; I've—been—in—such a rush I feel dizzy."

Dora threw her a look of anxiety.

"Yes'm; we git a cab."

"Just a minute — I must send a telegram." She got

to the telegraph booth, seized a blank and sent a message to her father.

CAPTAIN BURKE WEST,
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND.
COME TO NEW YORK IMMEDIATELY.
ELLEN.

By a desperate effort she kept on her feet until she reached her apartment.

When the old Captain hurried into her room next morning her fever was a hundred and four and she was delirious.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE OLD SOLDIER

CAPTAIN WEST took charge of the apartment and called another doctor. Ellen's physician mildly protested against the necessity of such action on the second day of her attack.

The fiery-tempered old man would brook no argument.

"I want a consultation, sir, immediately!" he snapped. "My daughter is dangerously ill. She's the one human being I have always loved — my other daughter never understood me. I'll take no chances. Will you call the best doctor in New York to consult with you, sir, or shall I do it myself?"

"Certainly, Captain, at once."

The consulting physician confirmed the first diagnosis. The evidences of brain fever were unmistakeable.

"Call two trained nurses," the Captain ordered.

For a week the old man never left her bedside during the day except to take his meals. The first hour of his watch he had caught a sentence from her fevered lips that set his brain on fire. He insisted on every moment by her that his strength would permit.

The night nurse usually had to drag him to his room. And he would often suddenly reappear at the door staring at the prostrate figure, a strange glitter in the depths of his eyes. The nurse was alarmed for his reason and insisted on the doctor prescribing for his insomnia.

He threw the medicine out of the window.

"Don't bring any more of that stuff to me!" he growled. "I'll let you know if I need it."

By the end of the third day the fever suddenly began to subside and her brain to clear. The old man watched her with his keen eyes trying to pierce the depths of her soul.

The hard light in them softened as he saw her smile for the first time.

"So you've come, dad!" she murmured.

"Yes, my baby," he answered cheerfully; "but you must not talk. The doctor says you'll get well. That's all I ask of the darn fools. They've got no sense anyhow."

"Then — why — send — for — them?"

The Captain lifted his hand in stern command.

"Don't talk!"

Ellen smiled, extended her hand and pressed his. He bowed his gray head and kissed it tenderly.

At the end of two more weeks the nurses were dis-

missed. She had recovered with remarkable speed. The doctor was surprised. A hidden reserve power within had set at naught all predictions of a protracted illness.

"I'm not surprised," the old man snapped;" my daughter's the most remarkable woman I ever knew. No two human beings, sir, are alike."

He would have given the doctor a lecture on physiology had he been willing to listen.

He excused himself with a smile.

"Call me, Captain, if she needs me," he said at the door.

The old soldier waved him off impatiently.

"She's all right, sir!"

Three days later he dismissed the nurses. Dora could now attend her simple needs.

He suddenly appeared in her room dressed with unusual care. He spoke with an obvious effort to appear at ease.

"I'm worn out with the loss of sleep, baby," he announced. "I've decided to run down to Lakewood for a few days."

"To Lakewood!"

"Yes. You're all right now. I'll be back at the end of the week. I've an old war comrade down there. I'll make him a little visit."

Ellen watched furtively.

The truth suddenly flashed on her. She had talked in her delirium. He had heard and pieced together the facts of her love for Manning, his betrayal and desertion. Merciful God! what had she said? Possibly everything. And what she had not said he had probably learned from Rose's letters. Once his suspicions aroused she knew him too well to doubt that he would hesitate at nothing. They had allowed her to read no mail.

A terrible fear chilled her.

"You mustn't leave me now, dad," she faltered.

"Why, you're all right. Dora's a good girl. She'll look after you and the doctor's just around the corner."

"I don't feel well this morning," she insisted.

"Pooh! pooh!" he growled. "You just want to boss your daddy as you always did. Go to sleep; I've got to catch a train."

He bent and kissed her good-by and turned quickly to go. Her keen eye in the turn caught the tragic purpose in the grim set face.

She leaped to her feet with a cry, sprang on him at the door and before he could recover from his surprise drew the revolver from his pocket.

She pushed him into a chair and slammed the door.

"What does this mean?" she sternly demanded.

The old man's breast heaved with emotion.

"It — means — that I am going to blow the brains out of the cur who has ruined my daughter!"

"Oh — no — you're not," was the cool reply.

"You can't stop me!"

"Yes, I can!"

She was deliberately removing the cartridges from the revolver. She placed it under her pillow and sat down on the edge of the bed.

"There are plenty of guns and I know how to use them, thank God," he muttered.

"But you won't use them, dad."

The old man sprang to his feet and turned toward the door.

"By God, I'll show you!"

She seized his arm and led him to the bedside.

"Sit down now and I'll tell you the whole story."

"The whole truth and nothing but the truth?" he demanded.

"The whole, bitter truth," she repeated sadly.

Without reservation, without excuse or palliation she told him the story of her life in New York, of her meeting with Manning, of their love-affair, of her forcing him into the free alliance of her new creed, of their bickering and quarrelling, jealousy and unhappiness. With simple honesty she told of the coming of Rose,

of their resistless love, of the fight he had made, of the girl's innocence of their former relations, of her sacrifice of herself and their marriage.

The old soldier had sunk lower and lower with each turn of the story. He asked no questions. He knew that she was telling the brutal truth without mercy to herself.

At the end she drew the revolver out and handed it to him.

"Now, I'll give you back your revolver. Do you wish to go to Lakewood?"

"No, my baby," he answered dully; "I just wish to die — now — that's all!"

"Why, why, my poor dad," she asked pathetically, "do you still believe in the magic of a marriage ceremony when yours trapped you in a prison which only the death of my mother opened at last?"

The gray figure stiffened.

"Marriage, my child, is a divine sacrament — the great social ordinance on which human civilization rests. The fact that your mother and I made a mistake does not change this. I have nothing to live for now. You were the apple of my eye — I'm done!"

She slipped her arms about his neck, her head against his breast, and let the tears flow unheeded for a moment.

"You musn't feel that way, dad," she murmured.

"We have each other; and for me it's still the morning of life."

There was a dead look in his eyes as he slowly shook his head.

CHAPTER XXV

COMPROMISE

ELLEN watched her father putter about the room in a hopeless sort of way without knowing exactly what he was trying to do. It cut her to the heart to see his abject surrender. There was something about his manner that told he would not rally. She thought with a shudder of the possibility of his death from the blow which she had given him. She must get him out of this dangerous mood. The afternoon April sun was shining in her windows with unusual warmth. She decided to throw on a negligee, go down to the library and cheer him up.

He protested feebly at first, but yielded to her firm decision.

"Run along, daddy dear, and I'll be down in a minute."

She kissed him at the door.

"Be a good boy, now, and I'll cheer you up."

He made no response and she found him ten minutes later seated in an armchair staring into space.

She took her seat at the piano and played for him for half an hour. He was fond of music and had always

been proud of her skill as a musician. When she rose from the piano he was still staring blankly into space. He had scarcely moved a muscle.

"Did I play as well as I used to, dad?" she asked.

He looked at her with a start.

"What — did — you — say?"

"Did you like the music?"

"Oh, yes, child; you always play divinely," he replied without interest.

He pressed his hand to his forehead.

"I — have — forgotten something I meant to tell you — oh — yes — the mail. You have a lot of mail."

He rose, went to her desk and drew out a pile of letters.

She glanced through them quickly and her eye rested on one with a Long Island post-mark dated the day following her collapse. In the upper left hand corner was the crest of Edwin Brown.

She opened and read it with a flutter of excitement,

DEAR MISS WEST:

A bolt of lightning suddenly struck me this morning when I read the announcement of the marriage of Mr. Manning and your niece. It was incredible, but it brought me the first hour of real happiness I have known in a long time. You have tried the high ideal of your creed and met with tragedy.

> The biggest thing that ever came into my life is my love for you. With you by my side I can do something worth while in the world. Can't we compromise? I'll give up the flesh if you will give up the spirit. Will you marry me immediately?
>
> EDWIN BROWN.

Ellen rose and walked to the window, her brain in a tumult. Life is made up of compromises after all. Why not? It would make her old father foolishly happy. To his mind Brown was one of the greatest figures of the city. He would strut over those beautiful grounds on Long Island the balance of his life with the vanity of a peacock.

She looked at his forlorn figure slouched low in dumb misery.

She returned to her desk and glanced through the mail again.

Another letter from Brown lay at the bottom of the pile. It was post-marked a week later. It was just a line to express his anxiety at her illness. He would await her reply with patience.

She called his telephone on Long Island. The butler answered and instantly connected her with Brown's room. He evidently had orders to await this call.

"Yes, yes, Miss West!" was the eager answer.

"Could you call at my apartment and meet my father, Captain Burke West?"

"At once. I'll be there within an hour; you — you — got my letters?"

"Yes."

"Within an hour — I'll be there!"

The boyish ring to his voice was pleasant to hear after the knocks her pride had received of late.

She laid her hand on her father's shoulder and roused him from his stupor.

"Wouldn't you like to meet Mr. Edwin Brown, dad?" she asked.

"Who?"

"Mr. Edwin Brown."

"The millionaire sportsman and newspaper man?"

"Yes."

"Why — I should consider it a very great pleasure to meet such a man. I have heard so much about him — why, of course, yes ——"

He paused and frowned.

"No — no — I wasn't thinking of what I was saying. I don't want to meet him — no!"

"I'm afraid you'll have to—he's on his way here now."

He shot a look of ugly suspicion that cut her to the quick.

"I won't see him," he snapped.

"Don't be silly, dad."

"To hell with him, I tell you; I won't see him!"

She made no further protest, but read her mail until Brown came.

She took his hand with a quiet smile and led him into the room. The old man rose awkwardly and tried to pass them on his way to the balcony stairs.

Ellen caught his arm and led him back.

"This, father, is my fiancé, Mr. Edwin Brown. We are to be married in June."

The wrinkled face flushed with surprise.

"What?" he gasped.

"Yes, it's time you made his acquaintance."

The old man extended his hand and Brown grasped it, laughing.

"You have brought me luck, Captain West!" he cried heartily.

"I've been your daughter's humble suitor for more than four years. She has just accepted me. May I have your congratulations?"

"With all my heart, sir!" he said, choking back the tears.

"This makes me very—very—happy, I assure you!"

He took Ellen in his arms and held her a long time in silence.

CHAPTER XXVI

EPILOGUE

THE tall figure of Edwin Brown no longer haunts the cafés of Broadway and Fifth Avenue. Long Island has gained in him an enthusiastic farmer, who gives much time to the breeding of fine horses and cattle.

On the day of his marriage he bought *The New Era Magazine* and gave it to his wife. It is no longer the organ of radical feminism, but has become very popular and turned out to be a sound business investment.

In fact, Brown has proven himself in many ways an exceptional husband. The old Captain, who is his valuable assistant on the farm, whispers now and then into Ellen's ear that his like has never been seen. His stately daughter smiles a quiet answer that suggests an agreement with this opinion, although she has never ventured to say as much in the presence of mere man.

She writes her editorials now at a desk beside the south window of the nursery in their spacious Long Island home. A little cherub boy is forever pulling at her skirts, but she does'nt seem to mind — not even when he gets hold of one of her manuscripts and chews a page out of it.

THE END.

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